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JUNE 2024 ★ ISSUE 138

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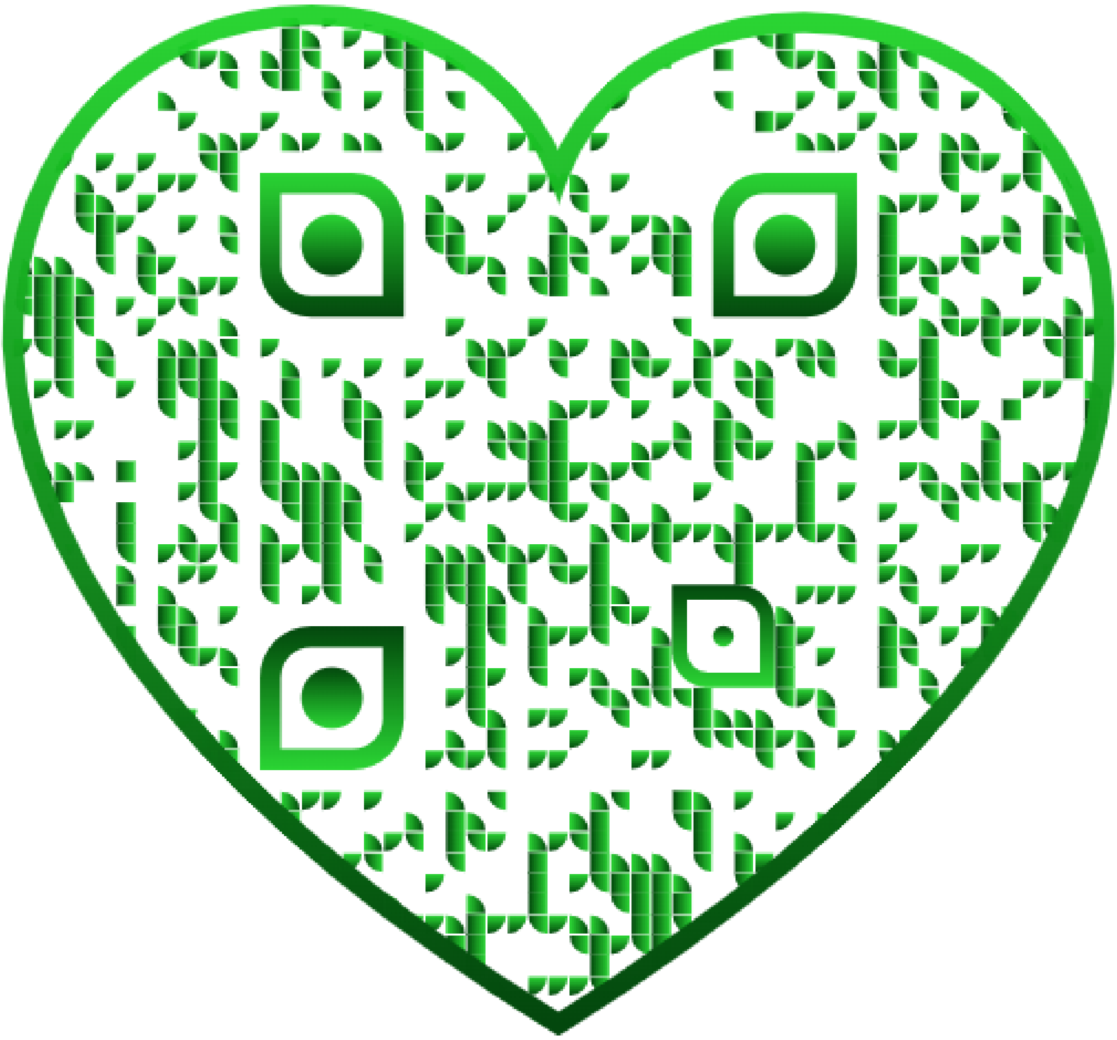

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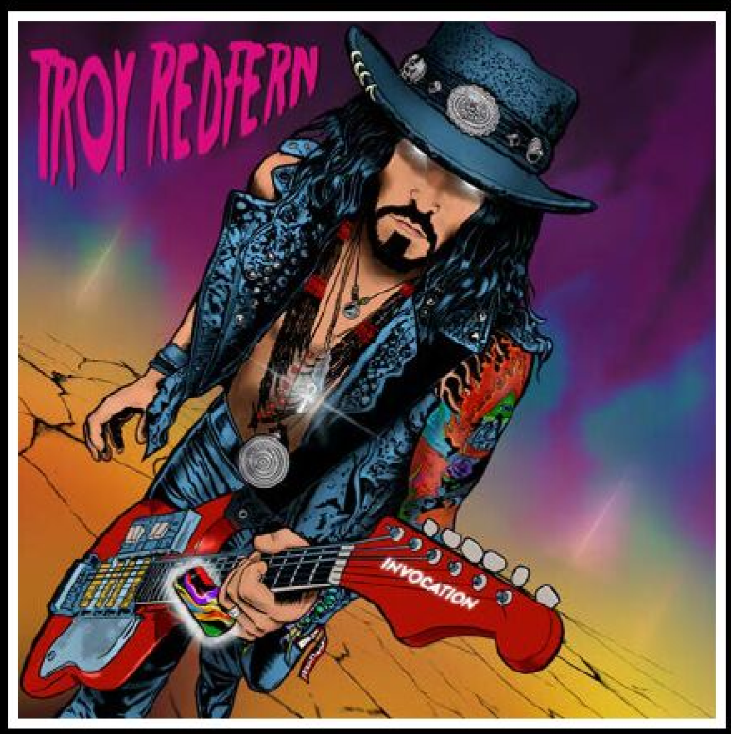

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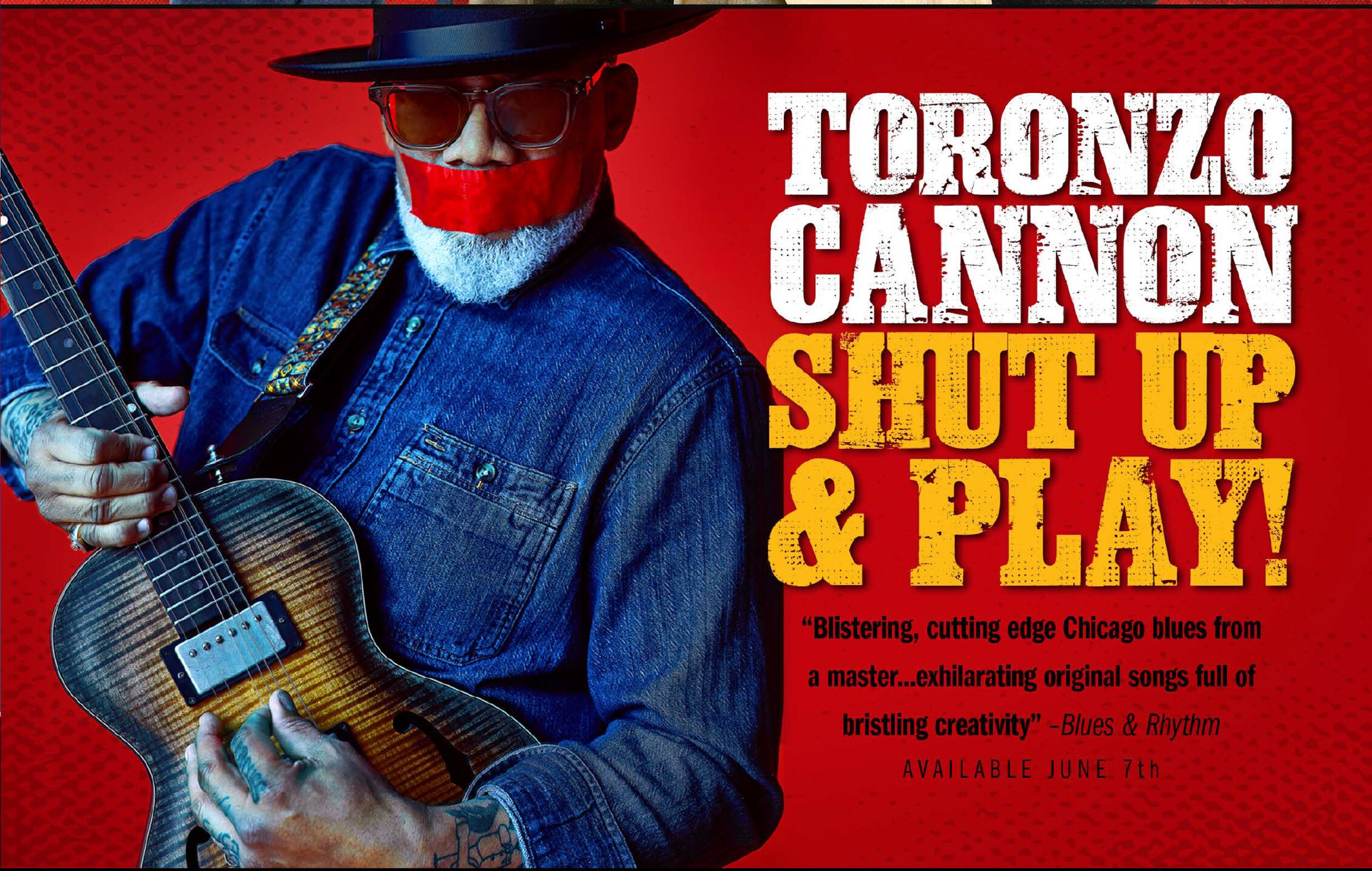

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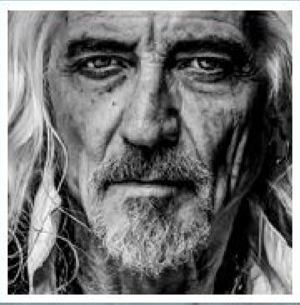
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BIG BLUES REVIEWS

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THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ AND HERITAGE FESTIVAL

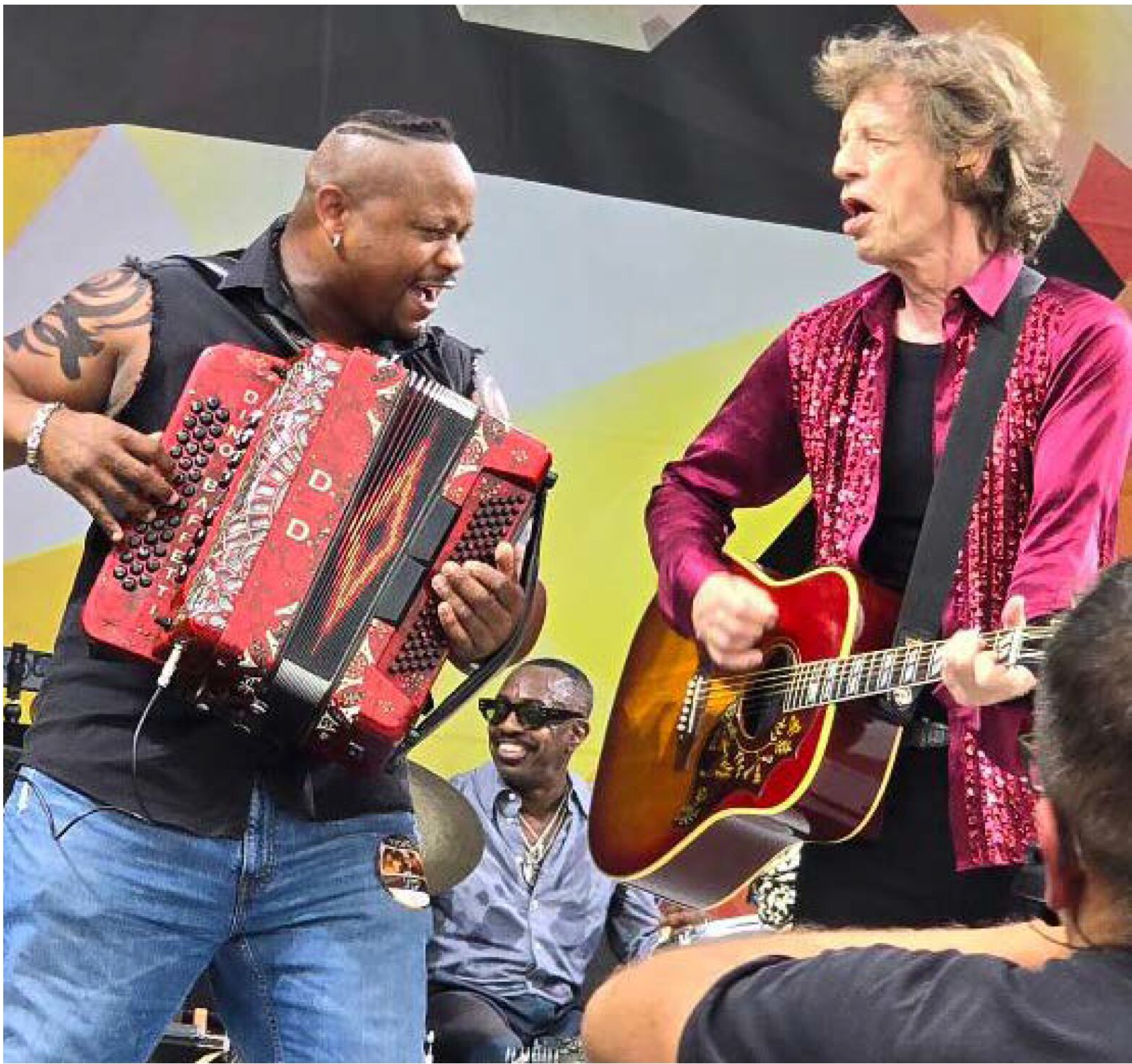
Laura Carbone

The New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, one of the largest music festivals in the world, spans two long weekends and features over 5,000 musicians performing across 14 stages. This iconic festival attracts half a million attendees and showcases a diverse array of music styles, transcending its jazz heritage roots to encompass a multitude of genres and cultures.

Notably, the Rolling Stones made a memorable appearance at the festival on their third attempt, captivating the crowd by closing all other stages for their performance. They paid homage to local music by inviting the "Soul Queen of New Orleans," Irma Thomas, to join them on stage for her rendition of "Time is On My Side," a song famously covered by the Stones. Additionally, they featured Louisiana's own "King of the Accordion," Dwayne Dopsie, adding to the vibrant local musical tapestry of the event.

Blues enthusiasts were treated to incredible performances by artists such as Christone "KingFish" Ingram, Mr. Sipp, Kenny Neal, Toronzo Cannon, Jontavious Willis, Samantha Fish, Johnny Sansone, George Thorogood, and Tab Benoit, among others, showcasing the enduring influence of blues music at the festival.

The rich cultural heritage of New Orleans shone through with appearances by Big Chief Boudreaux, his son Joseph Boudreaux Jr and his band The Rumble, as well as sets by Cyril and Charmaine Neville, highlighting the city's musical lineage. Closing the festival with an electrifying performance, Trombone Shorty and Orleans Avenue encapsulate the spirit and sound of contemporary New Orleans music.



FOR THE LOVE OF **LAURA**

AN ARTICLE FROM THE LAKE CHAMPLAIN WEEKLY

NESTLED IN THE NORTHEASTERN CORNER of Upstate New York rests the quasi-quiet college town of Plattsburgh. With many travelers only passing through on their way to Montreal or Burlington, Dr. Laura Carbone has all but single-handedly put Plattsburgh on the musical map — bringing award winning blues artists to the region for her Plattsburgh Blues & Jazz (PB&J) series.

Josh Miner   Jerry Cadieux

For anyone who's had the great fortune of meeting Carbone, one question always pops up: "How does she do it?" "I don't think many people know this, but she's a really brilliant human being," says her long-time friend Carol Semrad. "I mean, she's an incredible doctor, scientist… near genius, I would say, if not genius."

The pair met while Carbone was completing her medical residency at Northwestern in Chicago, with the blues serving as a constant backdrop to their studies. Attending some of the hottest blues clubs in the country, Carbone's fascination with music was just getting started.

After finishing her studies in Chicago, Carbone moved to New York where she continued to juggle the lives of both a practicing physician, as well as an active blues lover. She would ultimately engrain herself as an important pillar of the North Country, through both her service to the medical community, as well as her creation of PB&J.

Specializing in nephrology, her professional life tasks her with the life-saving work of treating those with serious kidney issues. When she's not saving the lives of North Country residents, her focus is music and how she can bring even more to the area.

Going strong for over half a decade now, PB&J has brought world-renowned musicians to our very neck of the woods. From Blues Musicians of the Year to Grammy-level recording artists, Carbone works tirelessly to bring the best the blues music scene has to offer right to our doorstep.

Canadian blues artist Dawn Tyler Watson is one of those musicians who — like most other artists — have found both a close friend and music promoter in Carbone. Those friendships have continued to grow tighter with every PB&J performance, not only at local venues, but oftentimes hosted in her own home. For Watson, the organization has become a family.

"It just fills my soul," she says. "When you see these people, everybody's happy, and everybody is happy to see you; everyone welcomes you with hugs. It's just such an intense community, family feel."

Watson says it provides a place for the community to come together while leaving their differences at the door. Regardless of religion, politics or whatever else may separate us, she says Carbone has successfully created a musical oasis for Plattsburgh.

In October 2014, Carbone approached Judy and Rich Guglielmo asking to sponsor a fundraiser for the Strand Center Theatre. Featuring Paul DesLauriers and Watson, the house party would eventually grow and evolve into what is now PB&J.

Tirelessly promoting the events, Carbone puts everything she has into each and every gig. All who know her know that along with music, her other great love is without a doubt photography. Featured in countless magazines, her talents take her across the world covering festivals and concerts. It's rare to even see her without a camera slung around her shoulders.

While some performers may be dismissive of photographers snapping shots up close and personal, every artist who knows her has nothing but enthusiasm for her and her work.

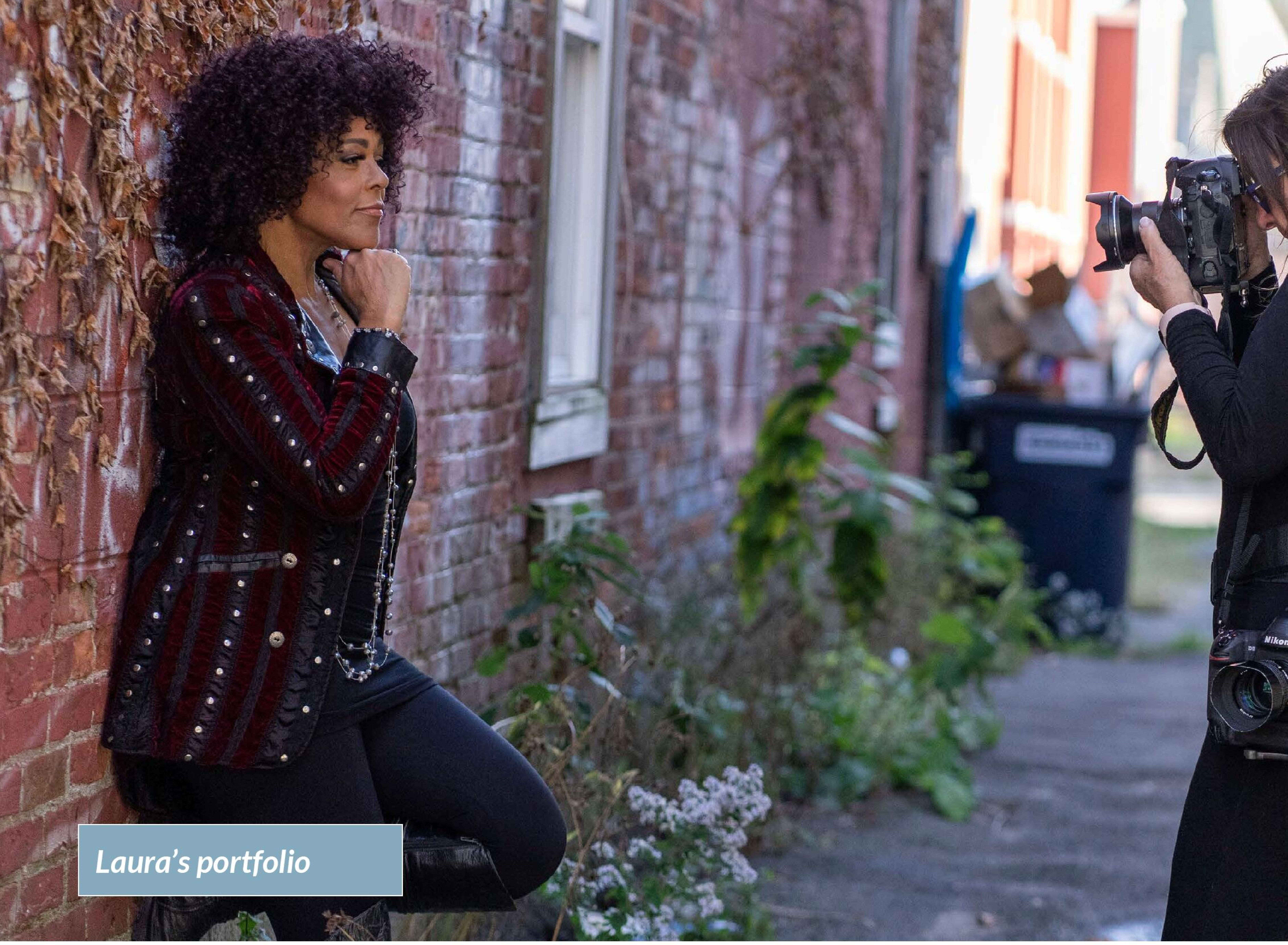
"You can feel her passion for it, and it instills passion to you"

Watson says she owes much of her success in the United States to Carbone, with Plattsburgh serving as an outlet for her and other Canadian musicians to get their music out to the American public.

"I seriously wouldn't be as well known in America as I am if it wasn't for Laura's efforts," she explains. For others in the community, Carbone has provided a much-needed outlet for music lovers to gather and enjoy world-class entertainment. For those like Tammy Laver, however, much more than just music is found at PB&J.

Several years ago, Laver brought her mother to one show, where she saw the magic of the music first-hand. "She said, 'Oh my God, Tammy. You go in one person and come out another,'" she recalls her mom saying. "I said, 'That's right! That's why I need it."

This is why PB&J shows are so important to people like her, Laver explains, and why they were missed so much during COVID. "I was in such a bad way. It was so bad for



me because that was everything," says Laver, explaining how she would hand out flyers wherever she went to get the word out. I'm so passionate about it. You can feel her passion for it, and it instills passion to you."

For those that have grown up in the area, it's easy to remember the decades that went by with artists skipping over Plattsburgh and leaving local venues empty. With Carbone and her endless determination, and COVID lockdowns becoming a distant memory, that is no longer the case today. "She's affected so many people in this area; she's changed my life totally," says Laver. "I literally feel like she's saved my life on many levels."

This year, Carbone's passion was recognized with a 2024 Keeping the Blues Alive Award for her efforts in photography, philanthropy and organizing events here in Plattsburgh, including programs to get music into local schools.

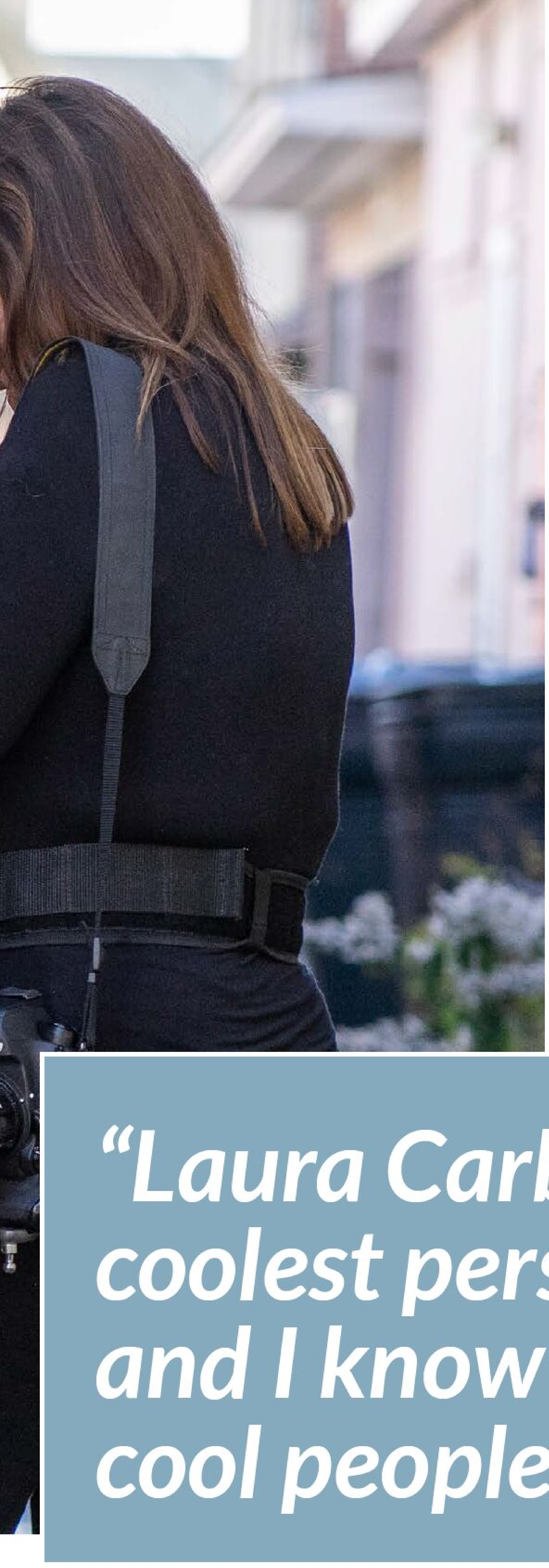
Through Carbone's lens, fans the world over are given an up close and personal view of some of the hardest working acts in music today. Through her tireless work in PB&J, North Country residents are given an even more special opportunity, which many will simply never have — a chance to see the biggest names in blues from just a few feet away.

While you may know Carbone through her work in medicine or music, those who count her among their friends (a list too long to print here), she is perhaps even better known for her endless kindness and generosity.

Not only does she promote PB&J acts coming to the area, but she also feeds and houses the artist — typically out of her own pocket. In a world where generosity sometimes seems to be fading, nothing could be further from the truth with Carbone. No matter what she finds herself focusing on, be it music, medicine or the community, she puts her all into everything she does.

Humble in the utmost, she would much rather see a friendly face (or better yet, a fresh face) buying a ticket to a PB&J show than to receive praise and honor for doing what she loves to do.

As for how she does it, Semrad says Carbone has a special ability to live parallel lives without letting them interfere with one another. And what makes her so special, everyone seems to agree, is her endless dedication and support for all the things and people she holds dear. Knowing just how humble she is when it comes to praise and recognition, those closest to her still feel she more than deserves



a little extra love and attention this year. "She's very shy about this type of stuff," says Semrad. "But I think she'll appreciate this…"

"My dearest Laura, you are proof that there is gold at the end of every rainbow and that all clouds have a silver lining. You have inspired us to aim higher and work harder because you believe in us so fully and unconditionally. Happy day of LOVE and LIGHT. I love you always."

— Shakura S'Aida, artist

"Laura Carbone is the coolest person I know, and I know some very cool people"

"Laura is truly a music angel. As if her award-winning skills as a photographer were not enough, her unparalleled passion and generous support of music and the artists who make it have helped to bring an impressive roster of talent to audiences worldwide. Through the years, she has personally housed and fed countless touring musicians, helping us along from Point A to Point B. Her incredible photographs have helped us to grace the covers of many publications, publicity posters and records. I am in awe of her heart and spirit and so very grateful to call her a friend."

— Anne Harris, artist

"Dr. Laura has been a dear friend of mine since I met her at the International Blues Challenge in Memphis, Tenn., over a decade ago. Not only is she an amazing photographer and successful blues promoter, but she has been such a help to traveling bands, such as GTBB, by offering her home [as] a jumping off point for us to stay in before we travel into Canada. Even if she's out of town, she would load up her fridge for us and house the six members of our band — showing hospitality unparalleled to anything we've ever seen in the South. It's no wonder Laura received a KBA! I would do anything in the world for her beautiful and spirited being."

— Matt Isbell, Ghost Town Blues Band

"Laura discovered the blues, and then with camera in hand, [she] shared that passion with Plattsburgh, establishing PB&J and turning on the town to some great music. At the same time, [she provided] many blues acts a venue and home here in the North Country. Thank you, Laura, and Happy Birthday!"

— Bill Blough, artist

"It was October 2014 when Laura asked Judy and I to sponsor a fundraiser for the Strand at our house. She had these two singers from Montreal; one was Dawn, and the other [was] Paul. Who would have thought that this one little house party would evolve into the Plattsburgh Blues & Jazz? Soon, there were events everywhere. […] Because of Laura Carbone, we now have a society of blues music lovers that are like a family; it is more than just the music."

— Rich Guglielmo, PB&J donor and supporter

"I can't express how thankful I am for all of the amazing music and opportunities that have been brought into my life because of Laura Carbone's love and dedication to music. She has a way about her that is so kind and generous to the community and all that are fortunate enough to experience one of the many events she has organized for all to enjoy alongside her. I am forever grateful."

— Jerry Cadieux, Plattsburgh photographer

"Laura Carbone is the coolest person I know, and I know some very cool people. She gave me a Little Water '78 of 'I Hate to See You Go' when we first met, hooked me up with my favorite gauge, fed the band a standing rib roast dinner and promoted the perfect show. She's the dream girl!"

— John Nemeth, artist

"Laura is such a giving person — [an] immensely talented strong, independent, successful, powerhouse woman! I have so much love and respect for her, her friendship and how she has changed my world! I am eternally grateful! Happy Birthday, Laura!! May you have so many more!"

— Tammy Laver

"One day back in the '90s, I was talking to Laura about how she fell in love with the blues when she did her medical residency at Northwestern University in Chicago. I told her that I did my undergraduate studies in Madison, Wis., and that I would always go to the blues gigs when they toured up my way. I told her how I made friends with Magic Slim and would buy him whiskey during his break so we would chat about the Chicago Blues greats, especially Muddy Waters. Laura immediately sat up and said that her and her friend, Carol, were Magic Slim 'groupies' and she knew him well! Eventually, late in his career, Magic did a gig in Montreal that Laura and I went to. That's when she got us backstage and ended up entertaining Magic and the band later back at her place on Chateaugay Lake. That's when I realized what a talent she was at bringing people and the great blues musicians together. That snowball definitely started rollin' downhill after that, as did her great interest in photographing these wonderful people."

— Bruce Bunn, donor and blues family member

SHUT UP AND PLAY

Toronzo Cannon, a Chicago bluesman extraordinaire, commands the stage with his electrifying presence and masterful guitar skills. Hailing from the Windy City's vibrant blues scene, Cannon has carved a niche for himself as a modern torchbearer of the genre, infusing traditional blues with his own contemporary flair.

Colin Campbell Sandro Miller

With a gritty voice that carries the weight of the city's stories and guitar prowess that can both soothe and sear, Cannon delivers performances that are as dynamic as they are soul-stirring. Blues Matters caught up with him at his home in Chicago via technology. We talked about the new release, Shut Up And Play, amongst other topics.

Musical Background

"It was all trial and error; I learned to play music by ear. I chalked it up as either you are talented, or you got a lot of time on your hands! I think I had a little bit of both where it's like, I don't know how to read music and I think I'm too old to go to school to try to learn music. So let me just pick it up as much as I can and piece it together with what little talent, I might have for retaining licks or chords from my heroes or blues standards or things like that. I also thought, how did Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf and all those guys learn to play, they didn't go to school for music. They just picked it up and looked at their influencers and they just put a piece together. So, I figured that's what I do, so I won't feel bad and that's how I learned how to play music."

Choosing to be a Musician

Unable to play basketball anymore, music became a hobby. "It was just something to sit around and do." Initially drawn to reggae, it became a passion. "I loved reggae at the time, yeah, I still do." Seeking an outlet, guitar caught his interest. "I just needed something to do." Introduced by his sister, who bought him his first acoustic guitar for $99, he picked up a left-handed guitar, unaware of its orientation. "I didn't know I was left-handed until I picked it up." Despite naivety, he pursued it passionately, "Totally backwards and kind of like naïve, I didn't know the guitar was the wrong way around." This pursuit evolved into a career, now immersed in playing the blues.

The Blues Effect

"Everywhere you go in Chicago there was a blues jam, it's not like a reggae jam and stuff like that. So, I just decided to go with the blues style. I grew up around the blues, and my grandparent's played blues music, which I didn't classify as blues music at the time, it was just music! But then when I got older, all these full circle moments started to develop where I would hear songs that my grandparents played at home. I was like, my grandfather used to sing that song to my grandmother. He used to sing My Baby like Little Walter and then that's what gave me my appreciation. Living around the corner from a famous bar called Theresa's Lounge I didn't know how big that club was in the Chicago blues scene. To me, it was a club that my uncles used to visit, and it was right down the street from my favourite ice cream shop. So as a kid, that's the only thing I knew about that place! But then when I got older, there was a full circle moment of how significant that club was in the Chicago blues scene."

Musical Influences

"My mother would listen to Motown and things like that, the Ohio Players, R&B of the 70s. Influences on my guitar playing? "I think I lean heavily on Albert King, B.B. King, old Buddy Guy recordings, I like that stinging attack of guitar playing. I listened to Little Jimmy King, Ernie Isley to get the nuances of how they played. Being self-taught required dedication: "You have to be dedicated; you've got to know your history. play a Stevie Ray Vaughan lick, it must be authentic. I'm considered a contemporary blues artist... I love my traditional artists, nonetheless. I had discussions, a few times with traditional artists. I know they feel a certain kind of way about how I present my blues because it's more than three chords. I understand, but my thing is Muddy Waters wasn't a traditional artist. Once he plugged his guitar in then it's not traditional blues anymore! The original blues style was people hollering in the fields with no instruments at all. Now that's traditional; the guy sitting on the front porch you know. So, I think being a student of the music, it would be the penetrating thing for me. I'm not just up there playing music, I do know my history of blues and how to combat certain attitudes towards how I play, there are all types. I love Elmore James, J.B.Hutto, Robert Johnson, but I didn't live in that era. Muddy Waters loved Son House, but he didn't sound like him, music evolves!"

Vocal Style and Stagecraft

"Well, I'm not a Sam Cooke I know that! My range is somewhere between Sam Cooke and Bob Dylan. I used to sing

"My mother would listen to Motown & things like that"

“the essence of blues is that it’s a people music”

in church, but in the format of a choir. I can sing low, and no one would hear me, you know? I remember the choir director gave me one fourth of a song to do by myself. It was a song called I Feel Like Going On, a gospel song. I was scared. I was eighteen or nineteen years old but think I rose to the challenge. But I couldn't wait to get my part over so the whole choir could sing and diminish my voice! Then I could get back in the background, but it sounded like somebody stepped on my toes. Stagecraft-wise I learned a lot from being a sideman with Tommy McCracken. I would also watch Buddy Guy, Albert Collins, and those guys to see how they engaged with an audience. They would come out onstage and make it like a 3D experience. It would take them out of the box of just looking at a guy on stage. You have to physically move your head like a movie to see this person. So, I adopted that, got to move around, and make it an experience so people feel like if you just walk past somebody and touch him on the shoulder, that person's going to remember that when they go home! Other than like you came off the stage and just say, hey, how you doing or whatever other than just standing on stage, which feels like a barrier between the audience. I can't cross this barrier; I had a couple of security guys a little concerned that I would walk out in the audience. I said to security "I'm not the Beatles or nothing, nobody's going to, rip my clothes off or nothing." I'm a blues dude and I think, the essence of blues is that it's a people music, like reggae. You should be able to break that barrier and go out into the audience and engage the people, in the context of the music, and leave people with memories."

Do you see a difference between audiences in America compared to Europe?

"In America, there are blues clubs. You can just roll out of bed and walk down the street and get the blues. I noticed in Europe, it's an event; people drive two and three hours to come see a show and the shows are not as long. We just played a show here in Chicago at Kingston Mines, a three-hour show. That means you're there six hours because there's one band here and they go across the hall. It's like six hours of nonstop music, I understand why it's like that, but I think compared to the European audiences, it takes away from the nuance of the event. I noticed everything in Europe is like; you will not see a 32-ounce can of soda; you

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THE CHICAGO WAY

see an eight-ounce. So, because you don't need 32 ounces of soda, similarly, you don't need six hours of blues, but six hours of blues, I get it. I retired from the bus company in 2020. I've had a couple of real experiences of life on the road. Sometimes you find out things about the band that you might not necessarily like. The road can be tiresome."

Working with Bruce Iglauer on the new release Shut Up And Play

"In collaboration with producer Bruce, Toronzo delved into the intricacies of songwriting, highlighting the process of condensing lyrics for impact. Despite occasional clashes, the partnership aims to elevate songs beyond simplistic narratives. "Bruce would give me challenges, cutting the song down, making it more consolidated with the same intensity. I critique myself and say I didn't need to put that line in there, Bruce being producer on all my albums has been a plus for me sometimes, me and Bruce really butt heads, but in a positive way! It's five years since the last release a lot has happened in my life in that time. I've been through a difficult divorce, some failed relationships after this as well. You're trying to get back out there on the market. It's like there is a different sensibility when it comes to relationships and how to navigate women and attitudes and things like that."

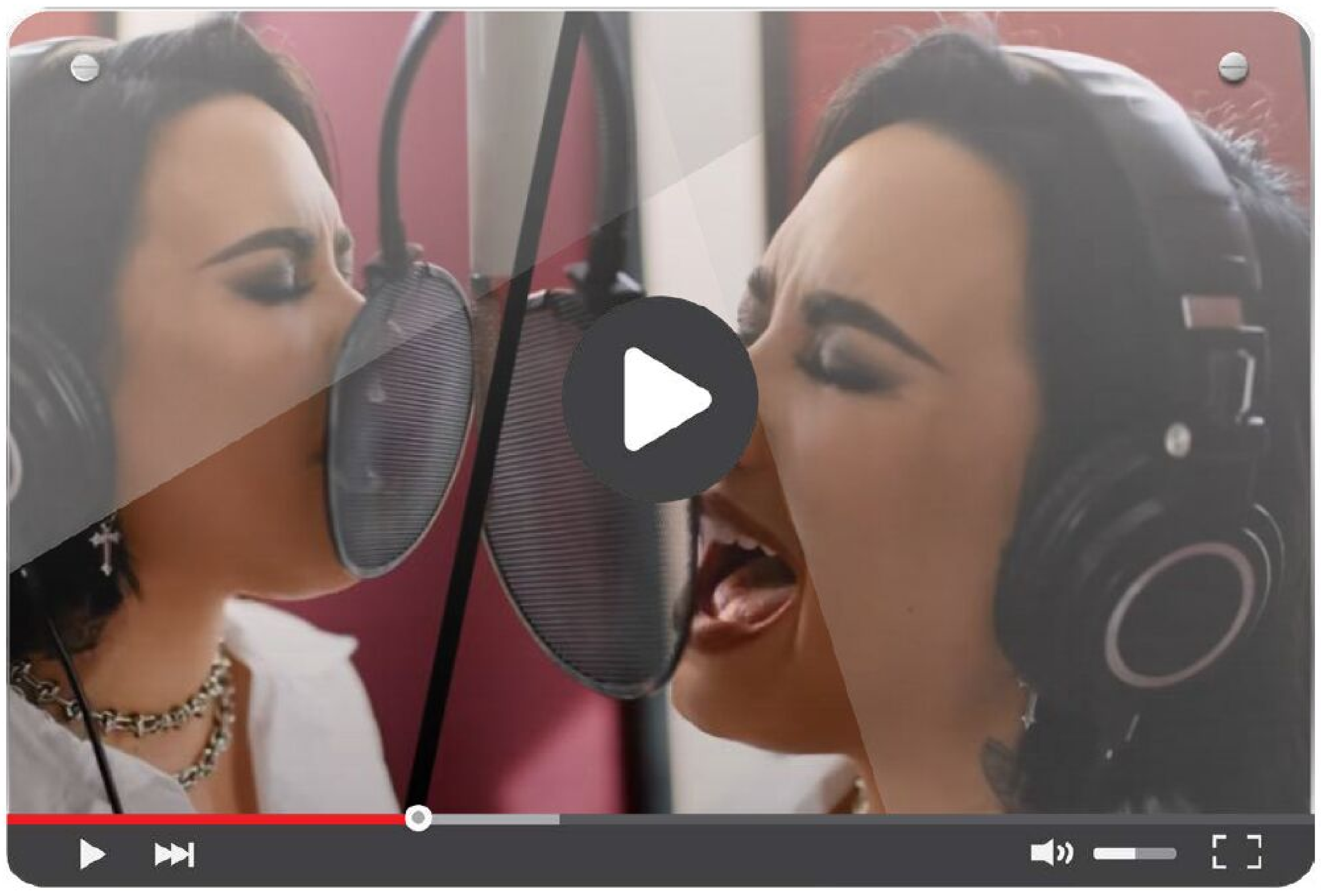
And finally...

"Toronzo reflects on the new release; It's none of my business what the audience thinks about it. I hope they like it, but if they don't, then there's art in that, there's critique. Everybody's not going to like everything you put out. I don't like everything that some of my favourite artists put out. I love the artist, but there's certain songs I gravitate to and listen to more than others. So, I get that part of it, that's what it's about. You know, you can't like everything, but you have to like yourself, I do. I pass the mirror sometimes and say, hey, look at you. Look at that dude, I don't have a long conversation with myself, but I do acknowledge myself."

For further information see **toronzocannon.com**

SLASH'S NEW BLUES ALBUM "ORGY OF THE DAMNED" OUT NOW!

Gibson Records and SLASH are excited to announce that his highly anticipated sixth solo album, titled Orgy of the Damned, is out now! A collection of 12 dynamic songs that shake up and revitalize blues classics with a stripped-down, instinctive approach, this album creates a singular expression that pays homage to the blues. It also has a star-studded lineup of guest vocalists, including Gary Clark Jr., Chris Stapleton, Brian Johnson, Billy F. Gibbons, and more.

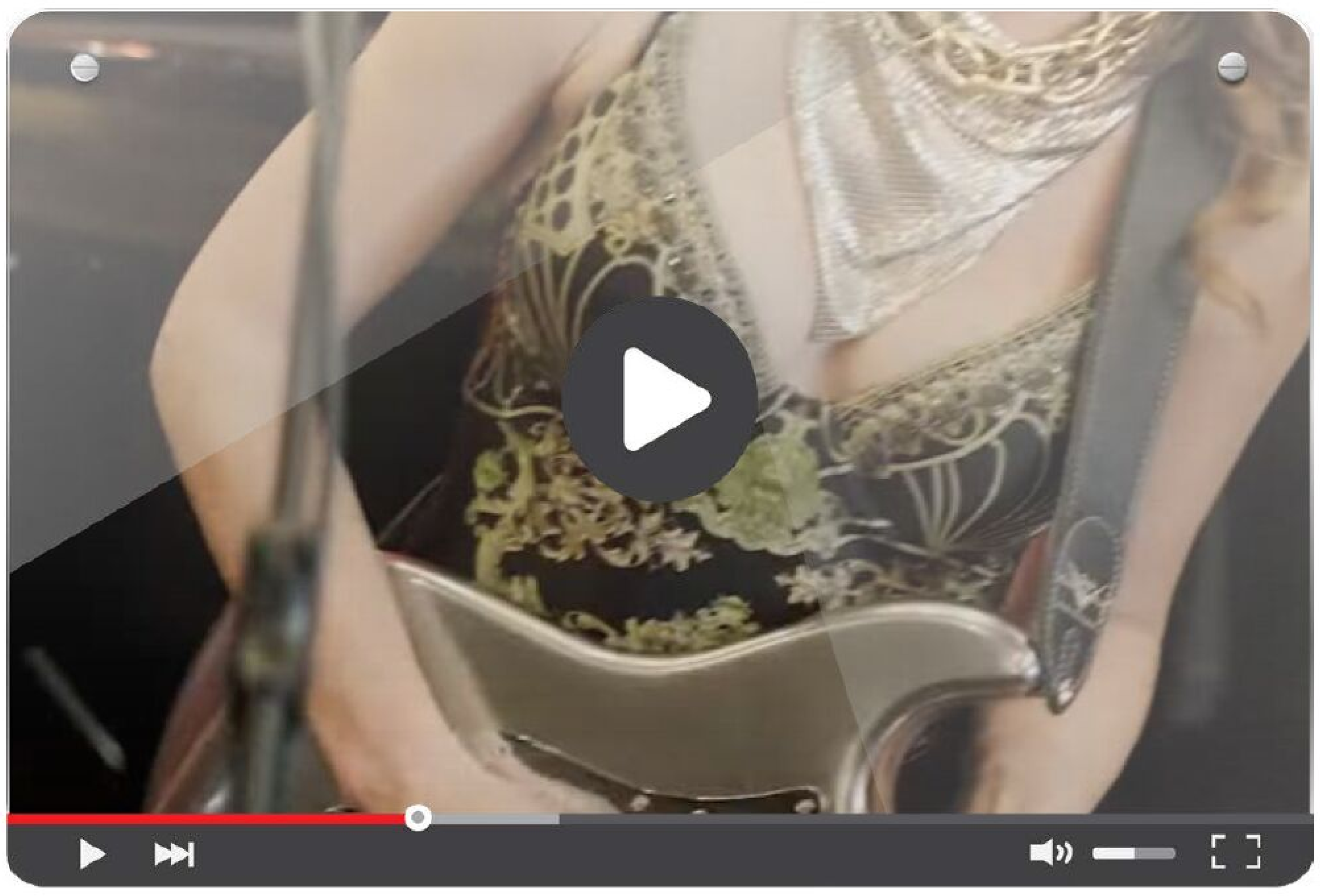


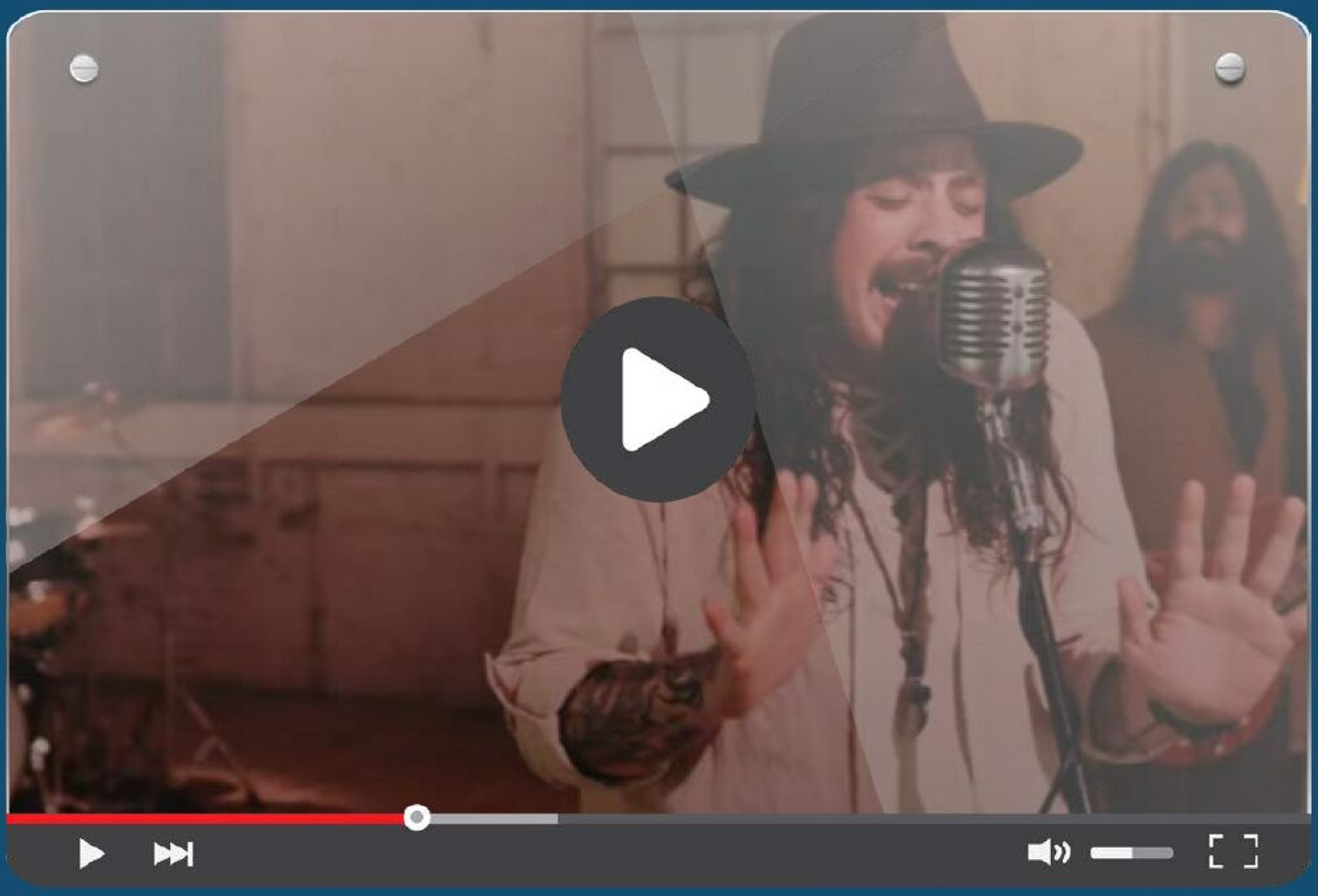
BONAMASSA'S NEW SINGLE "IF HEARTACHES WERE NICKELS"

Blues-rock virtuoso Joe Bonamassa announces the release of his latest single, "If Heartaches Were Nickels," recorded live at the legendary Hollywood Bowl. This poignant rendition, featured on Bonamassa's upcoming album and film release Live at the Hollywood Bowl with Orchestra, breathes new life into one of his earlier classics from his 2000 debut album A New Day Yesterday. The performance, enhanced by a 40-piece orchestra, captures the grandeur of Bonamassa's live show.

ANA POPOVIC LAUNCHES "FANTASTAFUNK" BIG BAND PROJECT

Celebrated guitarist and vocalist Ana Popovic brings her new musical adventure "FANTASTAFUNK" Big Band Project to prestigious music festivals this summer, including Monterey Jazz Fest, California, Notodden Blues Fest, Norway, Pori Jazz, Finland, and more. FANTASTAFUNK merges styles and is a musical fusion of Stax and Motown with contemporary guitar-driven grooves and delivers the sound that you have never experienced from Ana Popovic before.





THE COMMONERS RELEASE NEW SINGLE "SEE YOU AGAIN"

Following the success of their previous three singles "Devil Teasin' Me," "The Way I Am," and "Too Soon To Know You," Canadian roots and rock band The Commoners are pleased to announce the Friday 12h April release of "See You Again" – the fourth single taken from their highly anticipated third studio album, Restless. Released by Gypsy Soul Records on Friday 5 July 2024, Restless is available to pre-order at www.thecommoners.ca/store.

THE ALL-NEW

BLUES MATTERS PODCAST

Listen to some amazing interviews with the artists we've been lucky enough to speak to for the magazine.

SLASH

In this episode, join host Paul Davies for an exclusive interview with legendary guitarist Slash who has carved out a legendary career steeped in blues and rock.

DANIELLE NICOLE

In this episode, join host Colin Campbell as he sits down with the talented blues artist Danielle Nicole for an insightful conversation about her journey with the blues.

TROY REDFERN

In this exclusive interview, Paul Davies sits down with Troy Redfern to explore the inspiration behind his electrifying new album, Invocation.

AMAZING ARTISTS
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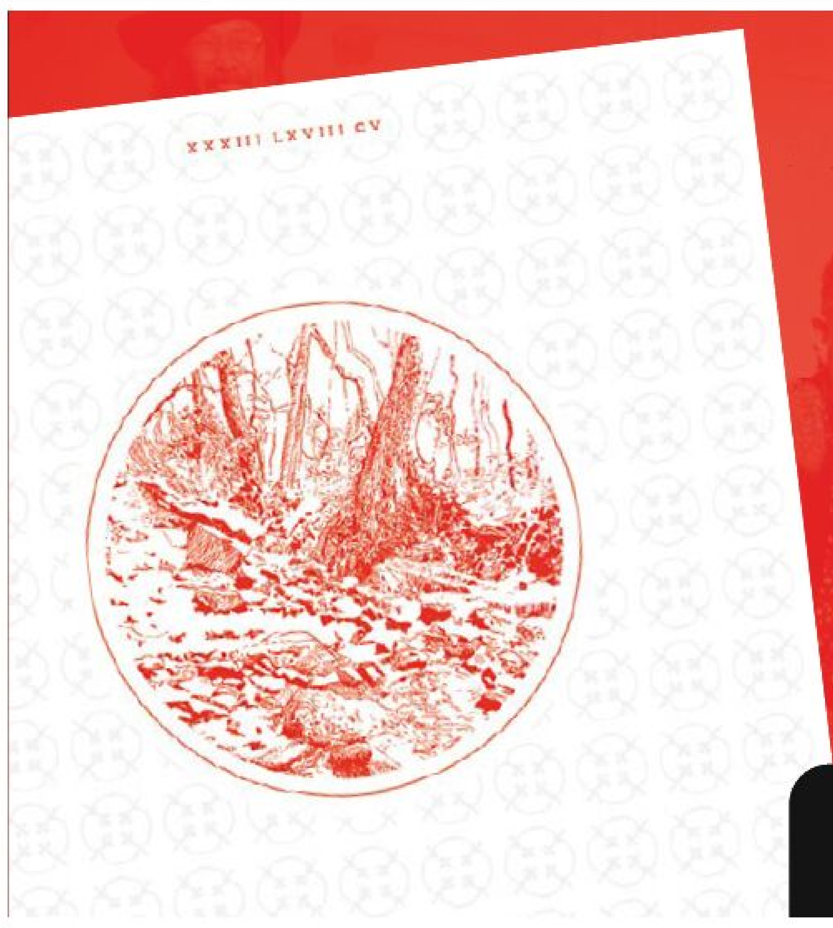

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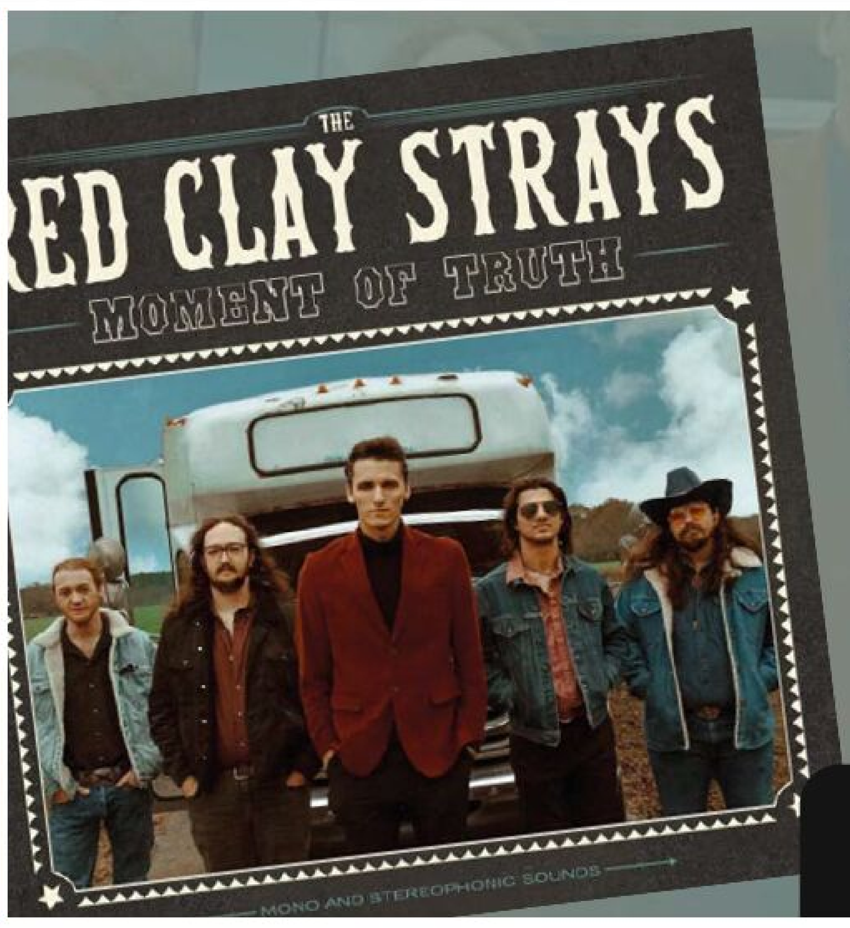

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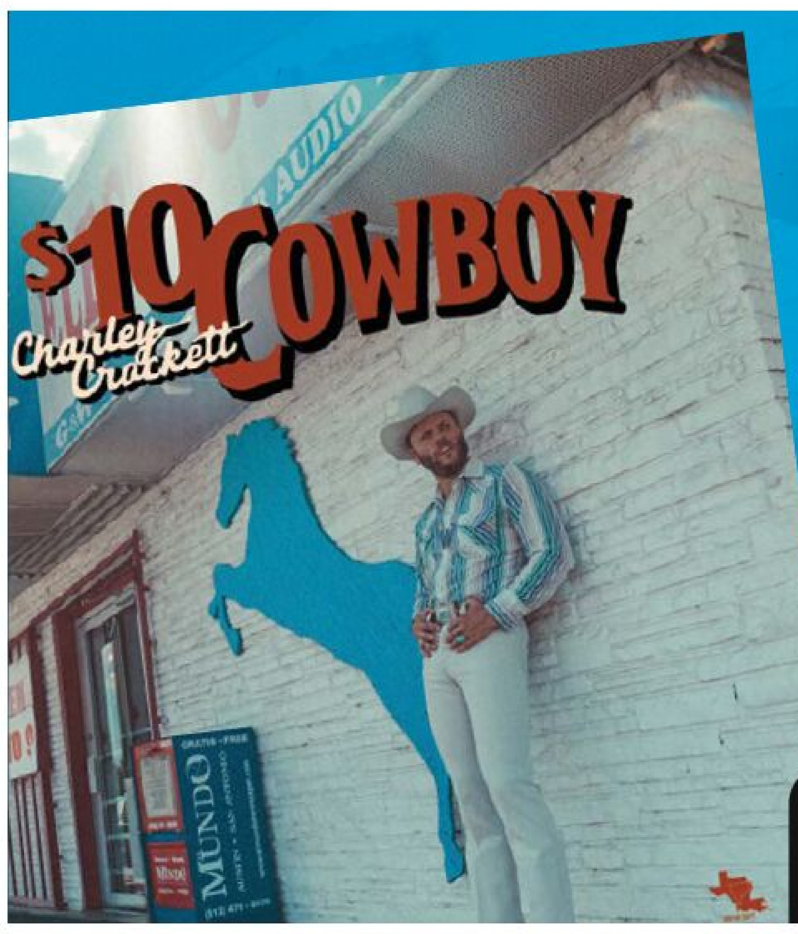

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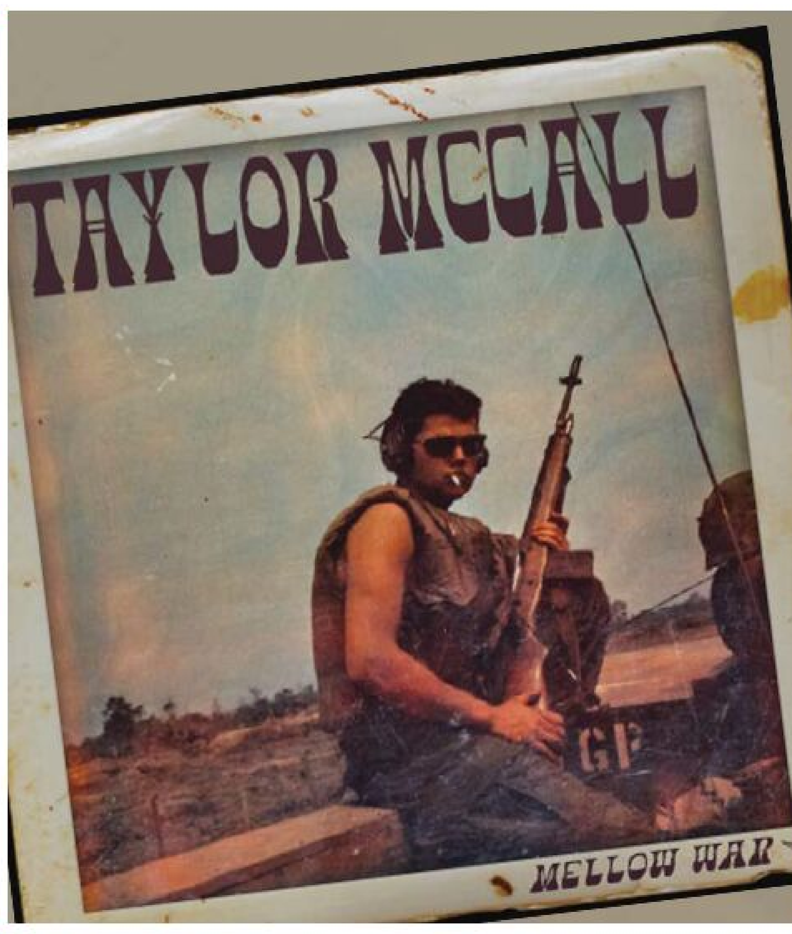

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THE HITS KEEP

AN INTERVIEW W

P ON COMING!

ITH RICK ESTRIN

Interviewing Rick Estrin, the charismatic lead singer and harmonica virtuoso of the acclaimed blues band Rick Estrin & The Nightcats, is a journey into the heart and soul of American blues. With his distinctive blend of wit, wisdom, and musical prowess, Rick has captivated audiences worldwide, earning accolades for his soulful vocals and masterful harmonica playing.

Colin Campbell   Steve Jennings

Steeped in the rich tradition of blues music, Rick's career spans decades, marked by numerous awards and collaborations with legends of the genre. In this exclusive interview, we dip into Rick's illustrious career, his influences, and the enduring magic of the blues. We also discuss the band's newest release, 'The Hits Keep Coming.' Although sounding tired having just played a few concerts in America, he was as upbeat as the last time we talked for Blues Matters. We caught him at home relaxing.

I look to his beginnings with an obvious question; what made you want to be a musician?:

"The earliest I can remember wanting to be one was as a six-year-old kid. I had an older sister who was about six years older than me. I always loved music, and I remember sitting on the stairs looking down, and she was having a little party with her friends. They were, dancing to and playing, Fats Domino, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Elvis. I was sitting on the stairs looking at all those fine 12-year-old chicks and thinking, man, that's what I want to do! I want to make people feel like that."

You quipped last time we spoke about making a living for fifty years playing a child's toy, what are your thoughts now about this?:

"I still feel that way. I mean, I'm making a joke, but I feel very lucky to be able to do this and to be able to continue doing this and b to have done this all these years. I've made a life out of it, it's a great life, it's perfect for me!"

Why did you choose the harmonica?

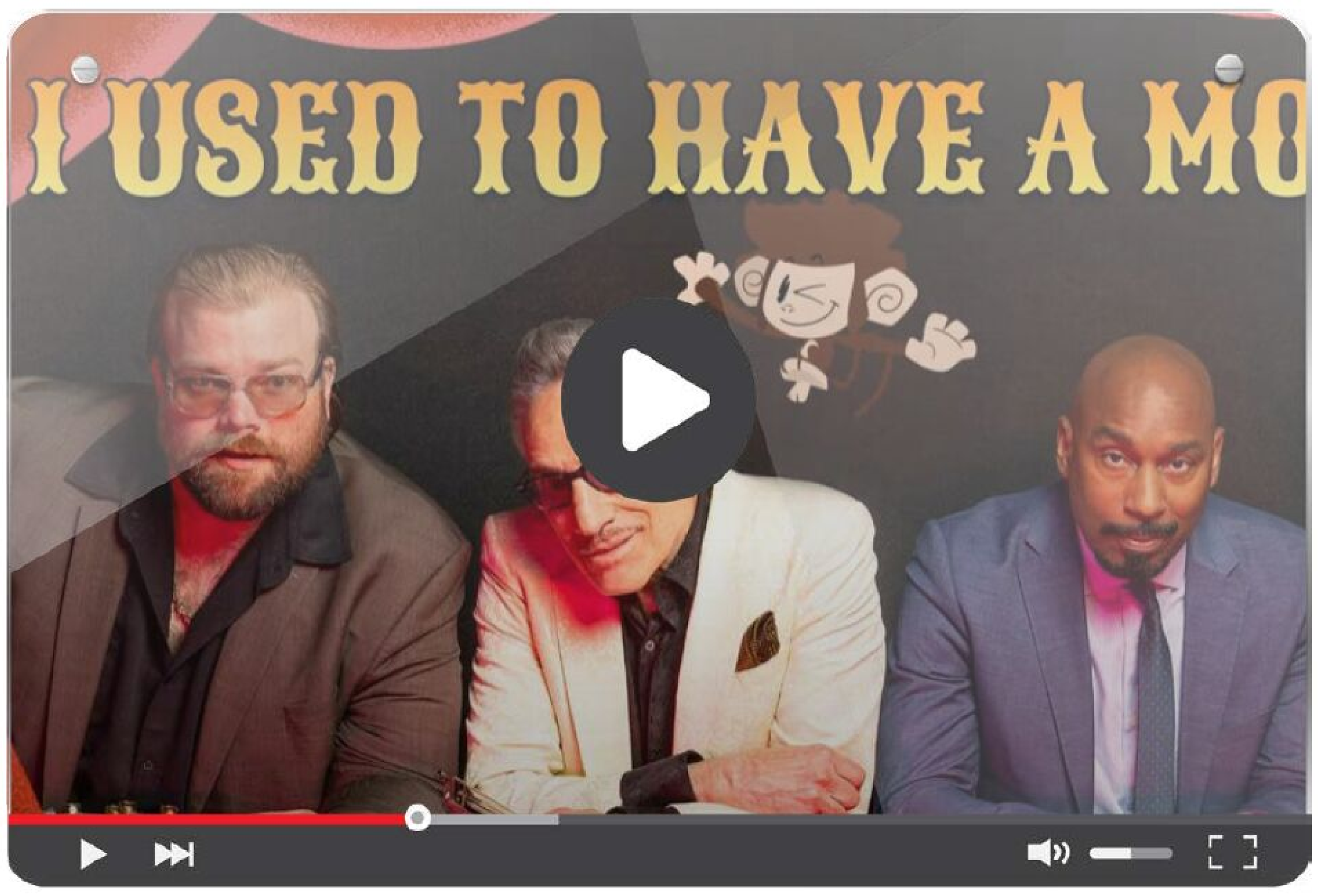
"It's just something that happened. I was a teenager; my father had died, and I was upset. I just drifted aimlessly, grief stricken and angry and all, it wasn't a good time. There was a band that lived down the street from me. All these guys lived in this one house. I'd go over there, and smoke weed and stuff, I was like 15 years old. I was over there one day, and there was another friend of mine there, and we were in a room, and he played the guitar, and I was singing. Back then I had more like a traditional vocal a better kind of voice. It wasn't quite as distinctive as it is now. The guy who had the band, goes, man, you know, you sound pretty good. He gave me a harmonica, and he said, you should learn how to play this. Before that I think my mother had given me a harmonica too, so maybe I even asked for one or something! That guy gave me that harmonica, I went in a room in his house, and I just stayed in there by myself for hours playing the harmonica. Not playing it as such but making noise on it, not knowing what the hell I was doing. But at some point, during that time in that room, I just decided this is what I'm going to do. My sister was like a kind of a beatnik, she had records by Jimmy Reed and Big Bill Broonzy and Champion Jack Dupree. Then other stuff like, Mose Allison and Nina Simone, all kinds of cool records anyway. They were right there so I could learn and start to copy them, playing the blues."

So, Jimmy Reed and Little Walter have been major influences on your career?:

"Yeah, originally Jimmy Reed and then I started finding out more about other guys that were playing. So, I got into Sonny Boy Williamson and Little Walter and James Cotton. There were a lot of concerts around San Francisco where I lived. So, James Cotton came out there, you know, and I saw Muddy's band, so it was an exciting time, and I there. There was so much great stuff that you could go see and absorb and try to learn."

You got any tales about James Cotton?

"Cotton was a fun-loving guy! There was one time when I was in Sam Lay's band in Chicago. We had a gig every Wednesday night at this one club. During that same period, every Wednesday night, Cotton was playing at Pepper's, not with his band, but with Scotty And The Rib Tips. The club where I was playing, closed at 2 a.m. Peppers Club didn't close till 4 a.m. So, I would get in a taxi and as soon as I could pack up my shit and get out of there and go see Cotton play. During that time, he had this woman th't was with him. She was a cute little pretty thing. This one week when I went in there, she was there with this big, tall dude that was a different guy! Cotton's up there singing and she's slow dancing with this guy and just grinding on this other dude on the floor. Cotton was singing this Bobby Bland song, Do What You Set Out To Do; "It's your world, baby, and everything in it belongs to you. You know, go on and hurt me if that's what you want to do." He's singing that and he got down on his knees and everything while he was singing that song. I'm watching all this shit play out in front of me and he just played his heart out and sang his heart out, man, that whole night. I went up to him on the break. I said, damn James you sound great tonight, man. He looked at me and he just



Any future plans to share?:

"I have great players and great people in the band. I just want to keep doing the best for them. I'm still enjoying myself, having a ball doing gigs connecting with people, it's all good. I want to be able to keep meeting the challenges inherent in putting on shows and maybe get to play the UK soon, we loved playing Edinburgh Blues Club last time!"

For further information see website: **rickestrin.com**

started to shake his head. He just goes, "Man, I got the blues this evening."

How would you describe the type of music you play?

"It's our thing. But stylistically we cover a lot of bases. The blues is a comfort, a joy to listen to. The lyrics are stories I identify with. It provides comfort, makes you know you're not alone. It's provided me with a life, a purpose. It's been the right thing for me."

The Nightcats shows are always an occasion, how do you keep the energy going and how did you learn your stagecraft?:

"I had some of the best musicians as examples on how to perform, present yourself, write songs, and tell your story. Some of the greatest people ever, who took an interest in me and explained things. What works is being yourself! If I couldn't make it my own, it wasn't going to work. You got to be genuine, relatable, yet special. It's a long process, but it works."

We talk about the new release, 'The Hits Keep Coming':

"The title track was the first thing I started writing. I started writing that during the pandemic and didn't really know if we'd ever even make a record again or what was going to happen, nobody knew. Then when things started to open back up. It still kind of pisses me off because 'Contemporary,' the previous album, came out right before the pandemic, and I felt like, we never even got a chance to work that record! It's like, now I got to make another. I've got to try to think of some more songs. So, it wasn't fair. But then I just started writing them, one by one, you know, that's how you do it. One song at a time, usually!"

LISTEN STATION

THE CIRCUS IS STILL

SHE NUTS UP

NOTHING BUT LOVE

“I thought hard about streamlining the songs, so they were concise”

Rob Blackham

THE REDFERN EFFECT

by **PAUL DAVIES**

Respected musician takes himself off to a remote spot to commune with his muse and emerge with a new album of songs. He isn't the first to explore this ascetic creative method, however, for UK slide blues king Troy Redfern this enforced isolation yielded superb results to form what is his best album to date as he tells me:" It was February last year and I hired an Airbnb shepherds hut in West Wales. I just took my guitar, my phone, recorded some ideas and came back," reveals Troy.

"Then Dave Marks (bassist and producer) and I started working up the songs like we did on my previous album, Wings Of Salvation." Preparation is everything as Troy details: "The demo stage was done quickly, Dave's based over in Ireland, so we worked out a way of him being able to zoom me and we used a thing called 'loopback' which means he has control of my computer in real time. He can hear in perfect quality stereo the same way that I can hear it on my side." He continues: "Dave can control my computer, so that method for the demo stage was super quick as we could interact and flesh out the ideas. He's a brilliant arranger and between the two of us everything was done really quick." With Invocation being a three-man band recording, the final piece in this musical jigsaw was completed by drummer Paul Stewart at Dulcitone Studios: "It's a private studio, in Kettering, for hire to friends. It's a converted chapel, so it's got a big space, and for the drums it has got the ability to multi-mic the room and get a lot of that ambience."

Ambience is the key word that reverberates around Invocation's eleven tracks. Troy had a sound vision for these songs that were written from scratch: "I decided to move it along a bit from Wings of Salvation. It's got the rocky elements in it, but I thought hard about streamlining the songs, so they were concise, and everything was stripped back," he says. "There weren't long sections, just three and a half minute songs. I'm at the stage in my career where I want people to hear my music." Troy has spent a considerable amount of his music career gig-

Live shots by Haluk Gurer

ging as a solo artist. He supported Philip Sayce on his recent UK tour where he found a younger audience digging his tour-de-force solo slide performances. However, he acknowledges that, with Invocation, now is the time to push forward as a group: "There'll be a headlining tour in June and we'll be going out as a band," he confirms.

"I was thinking about not doing any more solo stuff. But when I went out with Philip Sayce in November, I really enjoyed that run. It's kind of a trial by fire putting myself in a position where it's just me." He furthers: "I don't consider myself to be a solo artist, I consider myself to be a band guy. So, it's always interesting to get up there by myself because it's completely uncomfortable for me until I've done a few shows. Once I was halfway through the full-size run, I felt completely comfortable but it's good putting myself in an uncomfortable position and seeing what happens. It was also a completely different audience as there was a spread of age groups and it was great to get a good response during the solo thing. I enjoyed that."

Invocation is Redfern's third album in three years, and I'm intrigued by the relevance, given its hermetic beginnings, of this album's title: "My writing is almost like a channelling thing where I just let whatever happens come through. It's a description of that process invoking something to come through you especially in the improvisational sense because I always find that fascinating." Troy is keen to further explore this metaphysical state in the creation of his songwriting: "I was listening to a podcast about neuroscience and improvisational music suggesting the brain responds before the conscious mind can think. The process of improvisation isn't from a conscious part of the thought process, which I find fascinating. I know from my own experience that when you're up on stage there's no time to think. If you stopped and thought about it, then it's already happened. I'm relying on the fact that I trust my instinct and I can do something in the moment because it's not a conscious thing."

The finely balanced widescreen dynamics across Invocation from the explosive in your face blues rockers such as The Strange. Getaway and Van Helsing are leavened by the wild west atmospherics on Native and The Calling. All of which are birthed by unusual guitar tunings as Redfern explains: "The tuning I use is Orkney tuning, which makes it very difficult to do certain chord voicings because of you have to think outside the box with arrangements," he admits.

"The verse is going to be using a lower octave, it can be a higher octave, so you think more in those chord

Adam Kennedy

Jason Bridges

Rob Blackham

LISTEN STATION

- THE CALLING
- GETAWAY
- GASOLINE
- COME ON

Jason Bridges

"It's nice being creative with limitations"

LISTEN
TO THIS INTERVIEW
SPOTIFY

voicings. It's nice being creative with limitations." He continues: "It's a bit like when you're recording and studios have tons of plugins, which are the effects you can put on things, and you can get overwhelmed with choice. But if you've only got three plugins that you use then that makes the creative process because then you're thinking about being creative. You're not thinking about other stuff, and I think the same with guitar tunings in that they're limiting, but within those limits, you can create something." Troy employs this esoteric tuning on his recently purchased vintage Teisco guitar, his '62 Silvertone Jupiter Guitar (which expresses its enchanting tone on Native) and his trusty National Resonator (which he uses throughout his solo shows) across Invocation's eleven compositions and is a masterclass for any budding guitar player.

Troy also designs his album covers which brings to mind another more famous guitarist/artist in Ronnie Wood: "When I was a kid I loved art and I wanted to be a comic book artist when I was around fourteen years old," he confesses. "When I left school, I said to my parents that I wanted to go to art college. I've got three older brothers who are around ten years older than me and none of them had gone to college (Troy says he is currently estranged from his family), and, back in those days, not many people did A levels, let alone go to a college or university, and my parents said to me, 'No, you go straight out and get a job and pay for your keep'." He continues: "Around Hereford, which is my local city, it was the time of the goth era; guys and girls with big hair... So, my parents associated art college with this goth scene for some reason. Maybe they were worried. So, I carried on drawing and doodling and, weirdly, around 2000 I did a stint as a tattoo apprentice designing tattoos for people." With his keen eye for design, the moment finally arrived when he could combine his passion for music and art as he reveals: "For my Fire Cosmic album, I found a programme on my iPad called Procreate, which is a good art programme, and started messing with it. I could bring forward layers of dot prints and things like that for a comic book pack. I got a reference picture and started messing around and it ended up being the cover of The Fire Cosmic. I was so pleased that I made something that, when I was a kid, I would have been so proud of doing."

Looking to the future, Troy Redfern has grand plans to further expand upon his band situation as he admits: "I'd like to have a five-piece band. I'd like to have keys; I'd also like to have a second guitar because that would create more atmosphere. As a three piece, you're stuck doing more of a punchy, powerful thing because you've only got three instruments. It ends up being very in your face, whereas, with a second guitar playing, it sounds almost like listening to a stereo. Yet, it's always down to finances. It's an extra hotel room, an extra two hundred quid for a musician..." Hopefully, with the success of his most mature album to date, Troy can finally invoke the band set up he longs for.

Troy Redfern's new album "Invocation" is released by RED7 Records. Troy's headline UK tour runs from June 17–27, followed by a tour with Philip Sayce from November 21 until December 4. Album and tickets available from **troyredfern.com**

Peter Noble

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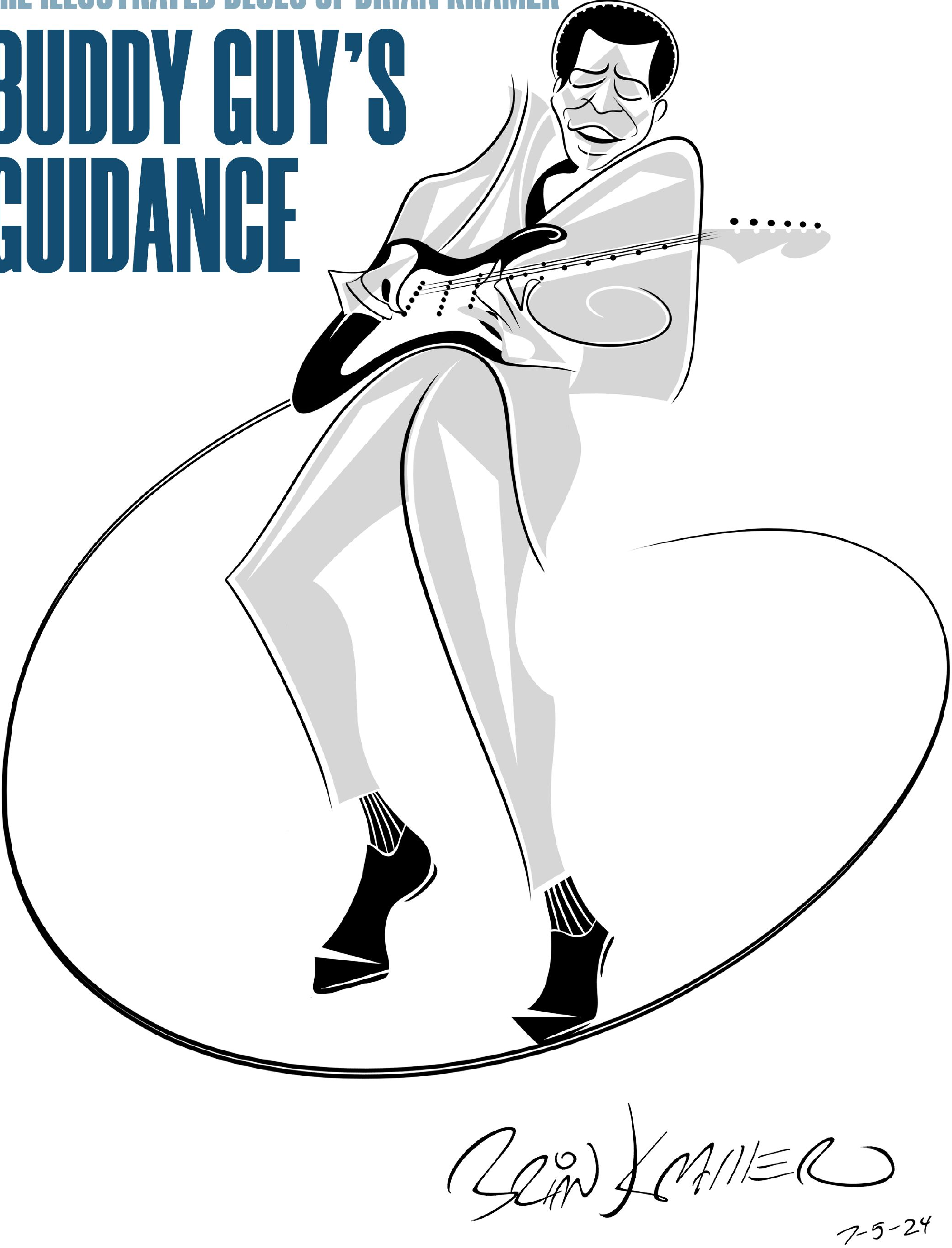
THE ILLUSTRATED BLUES OF BRIAN KRAMER

BUDDY GUY'S GUIDANCE



A Man And The Blues, Buddy Guy's 1968 Vanguard released was my introduction as a teenager and one of a handful of Blues albums I wore out on a daily basis.

So fluid and expressive, sensitive and deep, biting and caressing.

I first saw him in New York at the Lone Star Café in the early 80s and sat at a table right under his feet, taking in every electrifying moment. The closest association as a kid was if I were witnessing Jimi Hendrix up close and personal.

Couple years later my drummer at the time, Mitch asked me if I wanted to meet Buddy and Junior Wells, who he knew from Chicago, once again playing at the Lone Star. I was so excited, I painted a picture as a gift for Buddy from the cover of the A Man And The Blues album, which I presented to him.

I brought my metal bodied Dobro with me and upstairs in the dressing room before the show we passed the guitar back and forth and he played Two Trains Runnin' telling me Muddy had a resonator just like this one. Pure Blues heaven! I also brought a copy of the Muddy Waters Folk Singer album, which featured a young Buddy on acoustic guitar and he intensely looked over the album, emotionally talking of that session where Muddy put all his faith in him. He then said that he actually never owned a copy of this record, so I gave mine to him, which sort of caught him by surprise.

Every time Buddy & Junior would come back to NYC, I'd be there and they both greeted me kindly and took the time to talk and catch up. Buddy gave me some cherished guidance and encouragement back then that gave me confidence to continue forward; "Find your own voice in the Blues. Don't copy the notes, follow the expressions. You play YOU!" Were just some of his words that still are close to me.

He talked about how if he broke a string and didn't have a spare in the early days, he would tie the two broken ends together in the middle, just to keep on playing & avoid the steel knot.

Once he popped a string on his guitar and mid-song motioned me over, handed me his Guild Starfire and said he had extra strings in his guitar case. I went to the dressing room, put on a new high E string, then took a quick moment to squeeze a few licks on it before handing it back to him.

I've got some fond stories and memories that are close to my heart and am just filled with appreciation that at that time in my young life, I was bold enough to reach out and he was gracious enough to accommodate an eager youngster, thirsty for the Blues.

I've drawn a few illustrations of Buddy over the years, but here's the latest one which captures his vibrancy, elasticity and nimbleness on the feet, as he was in the 1960s.

NEWS...NEWS...NEWS...NEWS...

LAURENCE JONES SET TO ROCK THE UK WITH EXCLUSIVE AUTUMN SHOWS

Laurence Jones, the acclaimed guitarist, vocalist, and songwriter, is gearing up for an electrifying series of five intimate shows across the UK this autumn. Following the success of his 2023/2024 headline UK Tour, Jones is thrilled to announce his final UK dates of 2024, promising fans an unforgettable experience filled with his signature blues-rock magic.

"I can't wait for these shows," says Laurence Jones. "It's been so much fun playing almost the full album, your support has been unbelievable, and this is going to be a fantastic way to end the year on a high. Thank you again and see you down the front."

Kicking off on Friday, September 6th, 2024, at the Tivoli Theatre in Wimborne, Dorset, the tour will take Jones and his band to legendary venues such as Half Moon in Putney, The Jam House in Birmingham, and The Brook in Southampton, before concluding with a triumphant return to The Patriot in Crumlin on Friday, October 25th, 2025. These shows mark the final UK performances of 2024 for Jones's acclaimed 'Bad Luck and The Blues' album campaign.

Having extensively toured the UK and Europe with his Power Trio in support of his latest studio album, 'Bad Luck And The Blues,' released in August 2023 on Marshall Records, the autumn dates offer fans one last chance to experience Jones's dynamic live performances before he unveils new songs, a fresh setlist, and an innovative concept for 2025.

For Laurence Jones, every performance is a testament to his resilience and passion, as he battles Crohn's disease with unwavering determination. Expect nothing short of a mesmerizing experience filled with killer riffs, blistering solos, and a raw energy that's impossible to resist.

Don't miss your chance to witness Laurence Jones live in action! **Tickets are on sale now at AGMP**.

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BILL PAYNE LITTLE FEAT

Paul Davies   Fletcher Moore

If the shoe fits, wear it is a maxim that rings true for conga player and vocalist Sam Clayton who steps into the spotlight as lead singer on the first Little Feat studio album, Sam's Place, in twelve Years. It's a carefully crafted album whose eight tracks is dedicated to the blues and tailor made for Sam Clayton's deep and gritty voice as legendary Little Feat keyboard player, Bill Payne, tells me on our zoom call from his snowy Montana home:

"I was wandering around Cleveland, Ohio, and I thought, everybody in this group has a solo record and I thought we should have one for Sam Clayton," he shares. "Fast forward to a few years ago when we played a concert that was filmed and recorded in Albany, New York, and our manager and I agreed that Sam sounded good singing on the songs," Bill recalls. "I suggested we ought to do a blues album with Sam singing and I've resurrected that idea." He furthers: "Scott Sharrard (who fills the much-missed Paul Barrere's shoes) plays guitar, sings and is a brilliant songwriter suggested a place he'd worked in Memphis, Tennessee, which was one of Sam Phillips' studios. That's how it came together. I'm very proud of it and very happy for Sam. I mean, I've played and worked with John Lee Hooker, Buddy Guy, Otis Rush, BB King, Taj Mahal... and Sam's the real deal. So, I feel quite confident in the work he did and what he accomplished on this record, Sam's Place."

This has been a project in gestation for quite some time and Bill is cock-a-hoop that it's finally been released as he further details: "It's probably over fifteen, or so, years ago that I wanted to do a record with Sam, but it just didn't happen. All these things take place when they're supposed to, I guess I knew Sam had the goods," he philosophically states. "Especially after singing things with us for all of this time." Bill continues: "He sang Mellow Down Easy and Long Distance Call with us before and it's nice to have Bonnie Raitt join us on that." Bonnie is a long-time friend and supporter of Little Feat, and she lends her inimitable slinky slide play and vocal to Long Distance Call:

"Bonnie was there at the time of the new band which was when we got Kenny Gradney and Sam in from the Delaney And Bonnie band in around '72. She was in and around, maybe just a little later than that: definitely '73." As a founding member of Little Feat with Lowell George, Feat was a blues-based band over the first few albums especially when Lowell did his Howlin' Wolf impersonations. Bill possesses a gold mine of memories as he digs in to share with Blues Matters: "Yeah, but we had other tunes like Strawberry Flats. If you're playing rock n roll music, the blues is always a very close companion. I played at a club in 1968 in Ventura, California, which is the first place I met Taj Mahal, by the way, called The Back Door. It was only open for one year. Bob Jones was the fellow that ran it, and it was primarily a blues club, but it also had some high-end people coming in. Ramblin' Jack Elliott was there from the folk scene. We were all listening to the blues back then with the spotlight on Muddy Waters, Chester Burnett and Little Walter." He continues:

"A lot of that stuff came from Europe and England in particular, because artists in England such as The Stones were playing that music. Little Red Rooster, for example." Spooling forward Bill spills more golden anecdotes: "So, to be in a Madison Square Garden rehearsal room with Paul Barrere, Richie Hayward, George Porter, from The Metres on bass, myself during a rehearsal with Willie Dixon, who was a towering man wearing a pork pie hat and a three-piece suit. He was sweating and he's telling Richie to play softer, and I never heard Richie play that soft in my life," Bill laughs at the memory.

> *"I never heard Richie play that soft in my life"*

"Hubert Sumlin was telling us stories about Willie Dixon when he was a young man. If you got into an argument with Willie back then, he would take you out to the alley and, being a boxer, he might knock your head, so you pay attention. So, we paid attention to him," he laughs. "On the bill of that tribute to John Lee Hooker show, who came in with a babe on each arm that evening, was Bonnie Raitt, of course, and we were the backup band for Willie Dixon, Johnny Winter. Greg Allman, Joe Cocker...quite a cast!" He adds: "I got a chance to play on John Lee's album, about a month later, and gave me a signed copy of the CD which I treasure."

Little Feat has a full tour itinerary booked for the foreseeable future and are playing their classic Feats Don't Fail Me Now album in its entirety at their upcoming Baltimore show: "These albums are not very long and over A two hours plus show, we go up there and play that album

and it's over quick. Then we will play anything we want. We'll sneak in a couple of those tunes from Sam's Place as well." Bill tells me more: "We're also going out with The Tedeschi Trucks Band who are good friends of ours. We also have some shows with Los Lobos, great people." Talking of great people, Bill's thoughts turn to his much-missed old friend Lowell George: "We had our differences. We butted heads quite a few times as friends do from time to time. Lowell George was a product of his times in terms of his demise. You can put Jimi Hendrix in there. Jerry Garcia Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison, Brian Jones... it all caught up with them. I'm not casting any aspersions on Lowell because that was the troublesome part of it. But when he was on top of all that, he was a brilliant lyricist. His phrasing was impeccable. He had good taste in music. He had good taste in the people he hung out with beyond us. And he was a kind and caring person. The other 'thing' got in the way of that sometimes," confesses Bill.

The future is looking brighter than ever for Little Feat who have almost recorded their next studio album slated for release in early 2025: "It's pretty close to being finished and, as of yet, it's untitled. But all the tracks are cut, and they are all original songs. It's fabulous, too. So, we're in tall cotton as they say." With this to look forward to, we have the deep down in the groove Sam's Place to indulge in and the prospect of UK dates in 2025 in which to enjoy tracks from this current album, the next as yet untitled studio release and a cherished back catalogue of songs to almost die for. Now, that's some feat!

LISTEN STATION

- YOU'LL BE MINE
- MILKMAN
- LAST NIGHT

STEVE HARRISON'S

RECORD ROUND-UP

RECORD STORE DAY SPECIAL

As you may already know from my previous features regarding vinyl records, I am a total vinyl nerd. Well, let me clarify that remark, Blues vinyl! The older the better, and even better still, an old original copy, now that is the icing on the cake. I have been collecting records from an early age (11-ish) and used to spend all my paper round money on albums and singles. My obsession with vinyl has continued to this day, resulting in a collection I'm proud of. It includes all of my seventies rock albums; Zeppelin, The Stones, Sabbath... But it's the Blues that have taken over my life, musically anyway. There is no better feeling than finding a record shop, or even better, a record fair, and searching for those Blues treasures.

In 2008, April 19th to be precise, a new way of buying vinyl was introduced to the world. Who would have thought, sixteen years later, this would turn into a worldwide phenomenon? I am, of course, referring to Record Store Day. The very first event was opened by Metallica at Rasputin Music, Mountain View, California. The idea behind Record Store Day is pretty simple, it's to celebrate the culture of independently owned record stores, which brings together like-minded people all over the world. Many vinyl records are reproduced, colour vinyl being a very popular choice. Many original albums, some that until now have been discontinued, are brought back into the mainstream market.

At virtually every record store in America and Europe, and of course, England you will find people queuing hours before opening time, just so that they can get a particular album, a long-lost memento of years gone by. Or a new live album, by any one of thousands of artists and bands. This year has continued the tradition of long queues, eager hunters, and an army of record store owners, who will all openly admit, that this is by far their busiest day of the year. So, what tickled my fancy in 2024? Four albums to be precise. Two from The Rolling Stones. Earl Hooker, and, last, but by no means least, Howlin' Wolf.

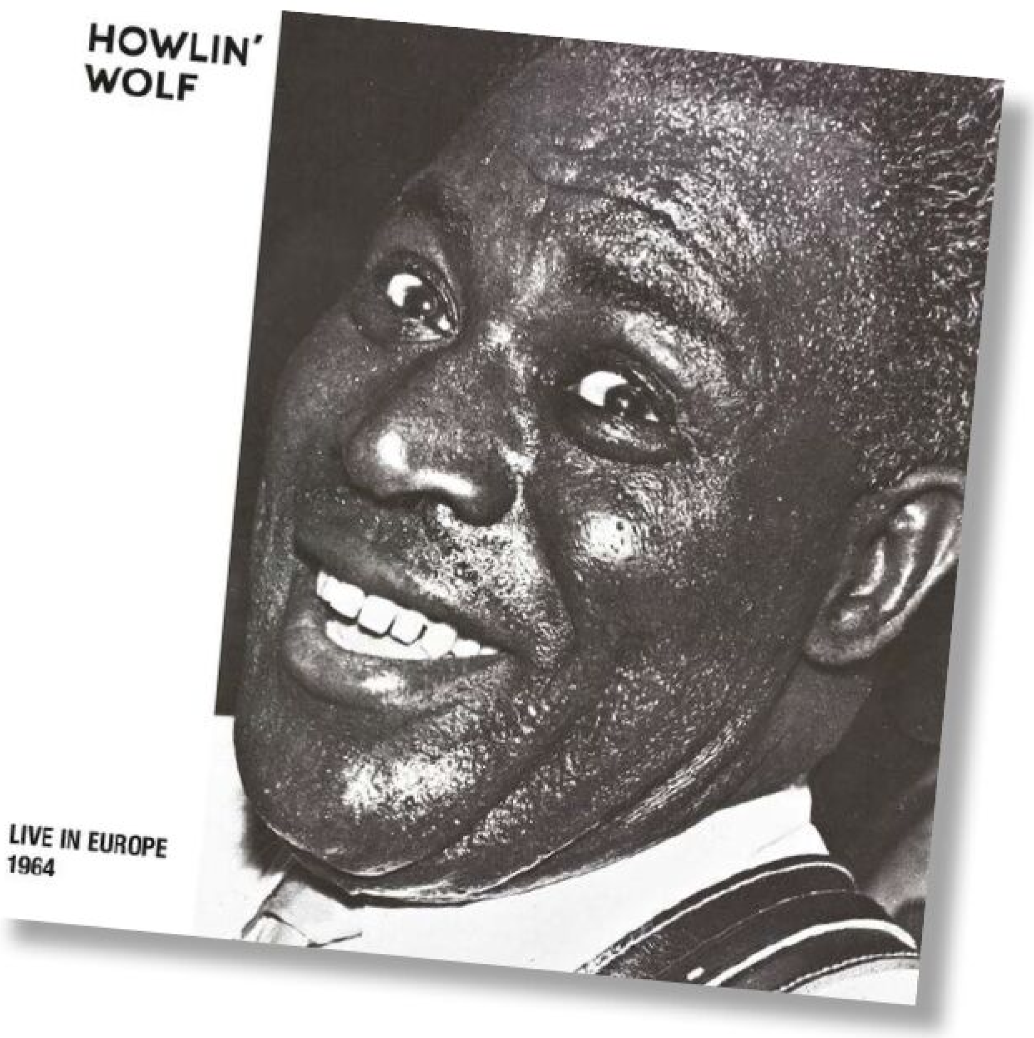
The Rolling Stones

LIVE AT RACKET, NYC

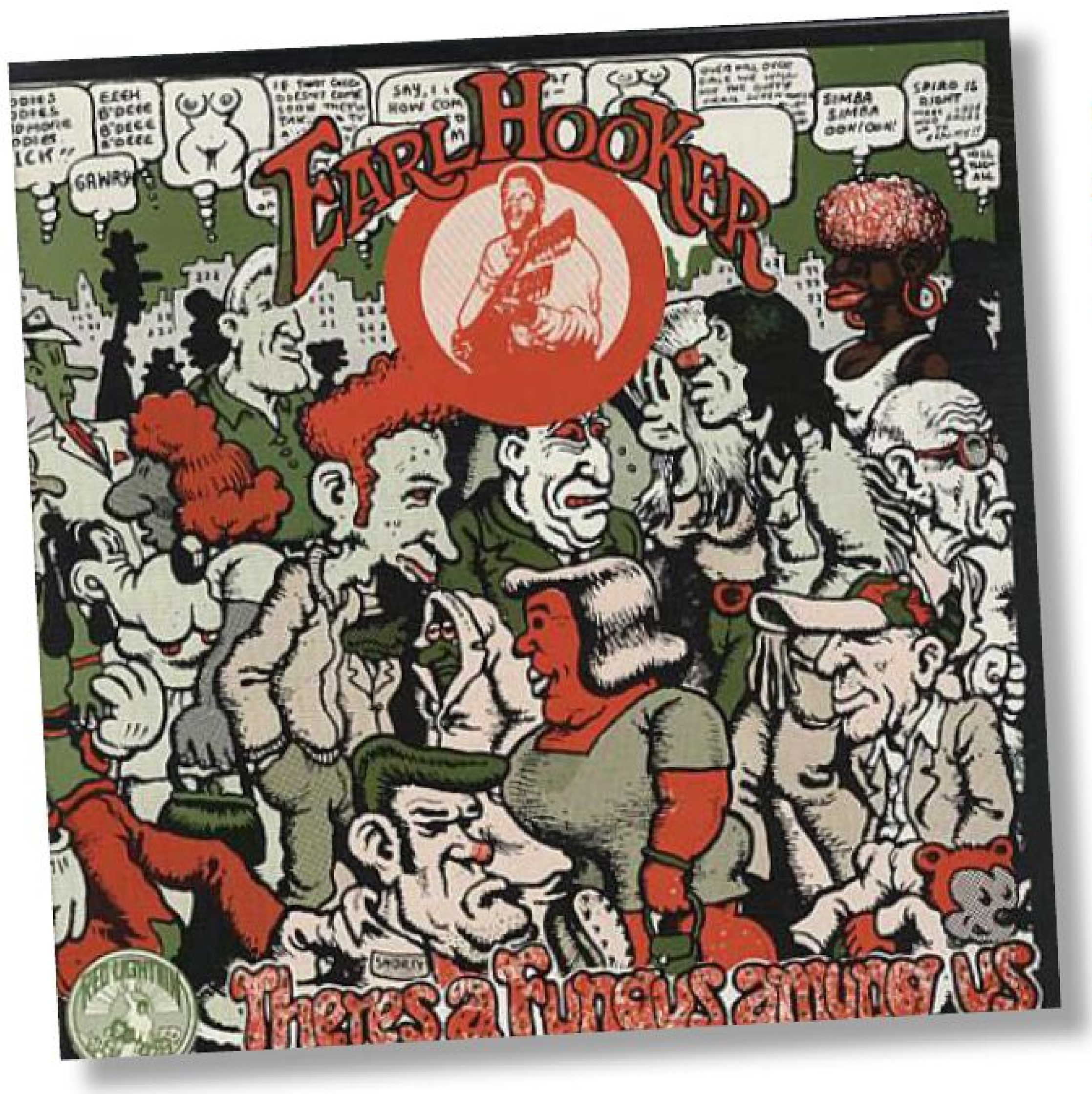
Now this album was recorded live at a small venue, something that the Stones are famous for over the last few decades. The backdrop for this gig was the recent release of Hackney Diamonds, the first original Rolling Stones album since, A Bigger Bang, in 2005. The album features legendary artists such as Elton John, Stevie Wonder, Paul McCartney, and Lady Gaga. The live album contains seven tracks, including, Jumping Jack Flash, and Tumbling Dice. The Stones are joined on stage by Lady Gaga, who delivers an absolute gem of a performance on Sweet Sounds Of Heaven. A must for any Rolling Stones fan.

Howlin' Wolf

LIVE IN EUROPE 1964



Just after the beginning of the sixties, the musical world had been turned on its head. It had seen the explosion of Rock and Roll, which in turn had spawned bands like The Beatles, The Stones, The Who, and a million others. What it also inadvertently spawned was the re-emergence of somewhat forgotten Blues artists such as Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, and, of course, Chester Burnett (Howlin' Wolf). These, and a multitude of other Blues artists had found themselves largely ignored back in America, so they managed to find a new and appreciative audience in Europe and England. This album is a milestone of that time for Wolf, who quickly grew a fanatical following. Appearing with him in his band were, Hubert Sumlin, Sunnyland Slim, Clifton James, and the aforementioned, Willie Dixon. This particular performance was recorded in, Bremen, Germany. I have many live albums by Howlin' Wolf in my collection, where does this one rate? At the top of the pile. Wolf is at his endearing best.



Earl Hooker

THERE'S A FUNGUS AMUNG US

Earl Hooker was born in Clarksdale, Mississippi, in 1930. A relative of John Lee Hooker, he spent his formative years in Chicago, playing with various Blues artists and bands, often sitting in upon request. He perfected the art of slide guitar having studied and watched players such as B. B. King, Bobby Bland, and Howlin' Wolf. This eventually led him to record his first album, in 1953. Not only had Hooker learned to play slide guitar, he also became proficient on organ and drums. But it was the guitar where he made his mark, often playing a twin-neck guitar or a twelve-string Gibson. This album is a shining testament to instrumental players at the top of their game. All songs were written by Hooker, each one a Blues tune that turned into a classic over the years gone by. Sadly Hooker did not enjoy good health and capitulated to tuberculosis in later years. He passed away in 1970.

The Rolling Stones

1964

The very first Rolling Stones album, which was released in 1964, had an inscription on the back of the album that said, The Rolling Stones are more than just a group-they are a way of life (Andrew Loog Oldham). Now in 2024, this is probably the best way to explain this band, and what they are about. But in 1964, they were renowned for being the best Blues band in London, something that they had always wanted to be. This, their debut album had only one original song written by messers Jagger and Richards. The rest of the tracks were penned by artists such as Willie Dixon, Holland and Dozier, and Phil Spector. The Rolling Stones had taken their live performances OF Rock and Roll and Blues covers into the studio with them. It is a rough-around-the-edges debut album, but you can see where the Stones wanted to go. The next couple of albums would see Jagger and Richards turn into one of the most prolific songwriting teams of all time. This debut album shows The Stones as the raw students of the Blues as they were, ready to change the world and turn it back onto the music that had started it all.

Rubber Soul Records

I'll leave the last word to a friend of mine Rob Barr. He owns Rubber Soul Records in Hanley, Stoke-On-Trent. "I started in 2012, it's always a very special day for me, mainly because I know how much my customers look forward to this day all year. On average there are around 400 releases for Record Store Day, I usually get about 200 delivered to Rubber Soul Records.

It can be hard to judge exactly which albums to order, of course, you have to order the big hitters, but I try and also order the more obscure stuff that I know my customers will be looking for. It's a balancing act, but one which I really enjoy. The customers enjoy it as well, each year there is a queue at least two hours before the store opens, and as the years progress it becomes a social thing, meeting the same people and swapping notes on what they are looking for in particular"

rubbersoulrecords.com

THE

RESTLESS

Chris Medhurst, The Commoners

Colin Campbell Paul Wright

I caught up with Chris Medhurst , vocalist with the Commoners ,via Zoom in Canada. They had just had a "dump of snow, very cold and preparing for a photo shoot." He talks about the contrasting experiences between making the band's latest album and the previous one:

"Well at least we didn't have to do the new one during a pandemic, so our time -frame wasn't drawn out over this two-year process" He emphasises the more enjoyable nature of the album-making process this time around: "We didn't have all this time to sit with everything and get nitpicky with it."

Over a concentrated period of two to three weeks, the band intensely collaborated on songwriting and selection, followed by recording sessions. Despite doing live performances, their commitment to the creative process remained steadfast, as Chris explains:

"When we got back from touring with Troy Redfern, we went right back and recorded some tracks, went on the road with Samantha Fish and Jesse Dayton and finished recording the record when we got back from the UK tour."

Medhurst expands on his own personal musical journey:

"I grew up in a very artistic and musical household. One of my uncles was a photographer. My father is a visual artist, and my uncle was a pianist. I grew up with a lot of art and music around me as a child, so I always just really loved listening to music. When I first started playing guitar, it didn't take me very long to start wanting to learn songs and trying to sing. I'd say I started performing live for the first time when I was maybe 14. So, I've been personally playing in live settings for like 16 years. So, there's a lot of influences, things that you take in from watching people, consciously and subconsciously. Then there's things that you just sort of form through figuring out who you are in that setting. I would say that the way that I perform on stage is changed significantly, even in the last two years with the tours that we've done. I think if you looked at videos from our first tour in Europe, compared to videos of our last tour in the UK, you'll see differences even in that time span. I think that just comes with experience and it comes with growing into what you're doing. I have had some vocal training. I found my voice through playing and covering songs. I wanted to improve and preserve my voice, so I had formal vocal education. Before every show, I do vocal warm-ups, cool downs, lots of sleep, and tea. My ability to be able to perform well is very important to me. I really am enthusiastic about playing music and about performing, it bothers me intensely if I feel like I can't be at my best. I push hard to be disciplined. I need structure in my day-to-day. Being bandleader brings responsibilities!"

How was your experience of UK audiences?, I ask:

"We love going to the UK. The crowd over there is amazing. It's still surreal to me that there's such a large amount of people that enjoy what we do and come out to our shows. That last tour we did with Samantha Fish and Jesse Dayton was amazing. We got to play in such cool venues, they were really nice to us. It was a great experience. I also got to watch their show every night, which was honestly like a master class in how to put together a live show. It is very educational and entertaining. The show ebbs and flows, it feels like you're part of something almost like theatre. It draws you in and it has high moments and moments that calm down. It's paced very well. Whereas when we were going onto the stage, we had to be on and off in 40 minutes and get our stuff off the stage as quickly as possible. So, we just came out swinging and then we'd pack up and head out for the night. Next UK tour we're headlining, so they will be longer more curated sets. We don't want to just play the album front to back, because if it was going to be identical to the album, you might as well just put on the album, right? We always use a set list, and we get a chance to jam onstage, I love the audience connection, he says, before adding:

"My favourite bands, when they're playing live, make me

LISTEN STATION

SEE YOU AGAIN

THE WAY I AM

FIND A BETTER WAY

feel like you're part of something unique, part of something special; so, we try and really curate our live sets in that way so that it is an experience for the people that get to come to the shows.

How do you approach writing?:

"We've got a few different processes. I do the writing. sometimes I come with fully formed ideas to the band. Sometimes they're half thought-out ideas, sometimes it's just a chorus. It's really a collaborative thing. Ross will bring guitar riffs, then we'll write in a group setting and start a song from scratch based around those guitar riffs. Ben will bring songs to the group that are sometimes partially formed or fully formed, then we work on them in a group setting, we alter things or keep them the same and just integrate everybody. Sometimes Adam will come with a cool groove, Miles with a cool piano part. It's like an open space for everyone to share their ideas, whether they're just instrumental ideas or if they're more complete song structures."

"Lyrical content is number one for me. It has to be something that I resonate with. I must feel like it's well written and well thought out and obviously that's so subjective, right? Because sometimes I hear a song and I'm just not into it, and you might just not be in the right frame of mind at that moment for that song. I love, big soaring melodies. I obviously have my own tastes as far as musicality goes of what I like to hear in music. I listen to country, soul, rock, and folk. My vocals are influenced by the likes of Sam Cooke and Otis Redding, that still resonates throughout this new album."

Your initial thoughts on releasing the new album, Restless?

"It's so hard for me to conceptualise until release day, then it almost feels like you're able to detach yourself. I've been so inside of these songs for the last few months. It's hard you know; you've got ten songs in the album. Obviously, I've written more than ten songs. We choose them based on merit and also on how things are going to work together in an album format, especially nowadays when everything is digital, you don't really need a physical copy. We put a lot of emphasis on how things are going to play out on the vinyl, that's how I listen to music. We try to make sure all the songs work really well together, and it makes a good listening experience for everybody."

Emphasising cohesion, Chris draws inspiration from iconic albums like Abbey Road by The Beatles: "You can hear that in a few of the songs here as well."

Acknowledging the influence, they aim for a seamless flow, reminiscent of the classic vinyl experience: "Some songs get cut, but we keep them around because we are happy with the songs, and they'll probably get used for something in the future."

Evolution is evident as they refine songs for each record, ensuring a perfect fit and a cohesive journey from start to finish. The song, Body And Soul has been around for a while, we completely rerecorded this for the new album. I think in the digital age especially, there's so much content being constantly pumped out that you can't really sit on one thing for too long, and you kind of have to keep that promotional train constantly chugging forward and putting things out there for people to consume. Just because

the nature of it, that's kind of become the expectation. That's why we have brought out two singles with videos so far, Devil Teasin' Me and The Way I Am. We hadn't really had a video done like that before, right? And it was a cool concept and I'm really happy with how it turned out. It turned out pretty cool. The new video coming out for our next single, See You Again, is another one that we're really proud of and looking forward to putting out. This album is much more observations from an internal place and more of a self-reflective take on the songs written. We all have a part to play in the overall beast that is the band moving forward. It's a natural evolution this new album! We recorded at RHC (Ross Hayes Citrullo, our guitarist and producer) Music with Ross in Toronto. It's beautiful, with a grand piano, great live room, vocal booths, and mixing room. We're blessed to have it. Many bands would kill for access to such a facility."

Let's talk about the tracks on the album:

Devil Teasin' Me: This is a song about people's vices in life, the different things we lean on, the different temptations we have, the things that we're potentially not pleased with about ourselves internally and that we're trying to work on. It's about just pushing through those things and conquering that aspect of yourself.

Too Soon To Know You: It's like reminiscing about things that could have been. Looking back at places and times with people that just didn't align. Perhaps those people aren't around anymore. But there's always memories. It's a very personal song. It's self-reflective, accepting life's ups and downs. It's not multi-tracked, it's a live off the floor recording.

With the Beatles already a clear recording influence, I look for any others of note:

"We're always influenced, especially by bands like the Allman Brothers, Marcus King, The Black Crowes, BlackBerry Smoke. Artists like Neil Young bring folky and acoustic elements. In recording, we aim for tone correctness and warmth, taking inspiration to curate our own sound and bring our vision to life. I would describe our music style as roots rock."

"It's nice to be able to live with a song for a little bit before you go into the recording process, because there is a certain amount of feedback that an audience gives to you about the direction of a song, and the more comfortable you get with it, the more you explore the space that is that song and allow it to sort-of change in a natural way. Most songs on the album have been played to a live audience."

Considering where the band is now and how he feels, Chris quips:

"I'm going to quote Jesse Dayton from the last tour, he's a hilarious guy honestly, it resonates with me because it's something that I think myself. I remember after one of the shows he said, "You guys are great. Just don't break up." I thought that was some of the best advice ever, because, from what I've seen from a lot of my peers in the music industry over the years is that one of the biggest things you can do as a band or as a musician is have staying power. I think that that really does make a difference."

And, he continues on the theme:

"You know, a lot of people go in with their five-year plan or whatever, but I'm entering into this with who the fuck I am, and this is what I do. I think having that level of conviction and that stubbornness and that staying power to just keep going no matter what, is probably one of the best attributes that you can have as a musician. And he put it so simply and clearly. But he's 100% right. Just do it because you love what you're doing and keep doing it because it's all that you want to do."

"Success for me would be just being able to keep doing what we're doing and, have it be able to financially cover me enough to live a modest life. I don't need anything crazy, I'm not a lavish man. I just like making music and playing music. As long as I'm able to do that throughout my life, I'll be pretty happy that's success to me!"

The Commoners new album "Restless" is released on July 5th by Gypsy Soul Records via www.thecommoners.ca.

The band tour the UK from July 19th until July 28th including festival performances at Maid Of Stone and Steelhouse.

DANI WILDE'S BLUESICOLOGY

CLASSIC BLUES WOMEN, PROTEST AND POLITICS

The association between 1960's Civil Rights and the protest music that acted as a soundtrack to the movement is well documented. This has led me to consider the relationship between Classic Blues Women and politics in the 1920s and 30's. Classic Blues music is not widely associated with protest or politics despite being performed by oppressed black women in the Jim Crow Era.

"There is little social protest in the blues… there is complaint, but protest has been stifled" says blues scholar Samuel Charters in his 1963 study 'The Poetry of the Blues'.

In her book Blues Legacies and Black Feminism, scholar Angela Davis shows that Classic Blues Women were far from stifled in their social protest against classism, racism, sexism, and domestic abuse. The protest blues songs of Classic Blues Women were rhetorical; they challenged the status quo without an explicit call for action, and sometimes their meaning was obscured with metaphor. Metaphor allowed blues lyrics to be coded to be easily understood by black audiences and more difficult for white listeners to interpret. Thus, these songs were deemed 'appropriate' for release on record labels run by white executives.

Davis cites Ma Rainey as a notable example of an artist who absorbed techniques from the music of slaves in obscuring protest so that it could only be understood "by those who held the key to the code." In Rainey's 1929 song Blame it on the blues, she sings:

"Can't blame my mother, can't blame my dad,
Can't blame my brother for the trouble I've had
Can't blame my lover that held my hand,
Can't blame my husband, can't blame my man
Can't blame nobody, guess I'll have to blame it on the blues"

Here Rainey personifies 'the blues'. Davis explains how Rainey's Black working-class audiences would have easily understood that 'the blues' in this lyric represents 'the white man' and 'the racist structure of the society in which they lived' as being responsible for their troubles. Had Ma Rainey not obscured her truth with metaphor, her record label would not have considered releasing the song. Rainey would perform live tent shows to segregated audiences. It is interesting to consider how many of her white audience members might also have cracked the code, and how this may have led them to question their own morals and the morality of the Jim Crow Laws.

Author Dorian Lynskey argues that Billie Holiday's Strange Fruit (Released 1939) was "the first great protest song". Whilst I recognise the huge significance of this song, I would argue that great protest songs had been recorded by classic blues women in the 19 years prior to

Holiday's haunting song; songs that paved the way for 'Strange Fruit' and for the well documented protest music of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement.

In 1930, Ethel Waters released a poignant song of protest, '(What did I do to be so) Black and Blue' where she sings the lyric:

"My only sin is in my skin
What did I do to be so black and blue?"

Here, 33 years before Martin Luther King would March on Washington and tell of his dream that his children "will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character", Waters sang of the injustice of judging someone by their skin colour. Ethel Waters had many white fans having performed on Broadway. She is recognised as a pioneer of creating Black spaces in what was deemed white entertainment. Waters also performed at New York City's infamous Cotton Club, which required Black female entertainers to pass the 'Brown Paper Bag test' to be hired to perform for the venue's wealthy white male clientele. This song was composed in 1929 by Fats Waller with lyrics by Harry Brooks and Andy Razaf. '(What did I do to be so) Black and Blue' was first performed in the Broadway musical Hot Chocolates (1929) by blues singer Edith Wilson and became a bigger hit for Ethel Waters the following year. The powerful lyric is a protest against racism that forces white listeners to question their racial prejudice. This is an example of how Classic Blues Women used their agency and platform as successful vocalists for social protest, challenging racist attitudes and Jim Crow laws.

Classic Blues Women in the 1920's and 30's used their musical output to support the New Negro Movement, aligning themselves with the politics of the The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

W.E.B Du Bois (right) was an activist, sociologist and scholar who dedicated his life to the fight for racial equality. He was a founding member of the NAACP in 1909. From 1910 to 1934, Du Bois edited the NAACP's magazine, The Crisis, which became a powerful platform for Black voices and activism. His 1903 collection of essays, "The Souls of Black Folk", is considered a groundbreaking piece of African American literature. It explores the Black experience in America and the concept of "double consciousness," the feeling of being both Black and American. In his book, he introduced the idea of 'The Talented Tenth,' the concept that if society were to invest in the most gifted Black individuals, their success would lead and inspire the larger Black community.

W.E.B. Du Bois by James E. Purdy, 1907: National Portrait Gallery under the CC0 license

A fitting example of Du Bois' talented tenth is Harry Pace, a Black entrepreneur who established the first successful Black Record Label 'Black Swan.' In 1920, Mamie Smith's Crazy Blues was released on Okeh records, selling over 70,000 copies in the first month and launching the 'race records' industry. Pace was quick to capitalise on this, and in 1921 he established the Black Swan Label in Harlem, backed by W.E.B Du Bois, who was on Black Swan's Board of Directors.

Harry Pace, who had studied under Du Bois at Atlanta University, was strongly influenced by his mentor. From the start, the label's ethos was closely aligned with that of Du Bois and the NAACP; to achieve the 'racial uplift' of Black people in America. In Black newspapers across the country, Pace announced his label with the slogan "The Only Records Using Exclusively Negro Voices and Musicians."

To achieve Bois' concept of racial uplift, it was important for the label and the music it released to be considered 'highbrow,' and so Pace hired jazz musician Fletcher Henderson as his musical director, and the classical composer William Grant Still as his arranger. At this time, Middle-Upper class Black and white society deemed European Classical music more highbrow than Blues and Jazz. Whilst Pace wanted to appeal to this educated and wealthy audience, he also recognised that female blues singers could be hugely commercial. The first vocalists signed to the label were blues artists Ethel Waters, Alberta Hunter, and Trixie Smith. Interestingly, Pace turned down Bessie Smith as he felt her voice was too 'rough.' He instead opted for Ethel Water's smoother blues-jazz vocal style which he felt sounded more refined. It was a surprise to Black Swan's business team when Bessie Smith signed to Columbia Records and by the 1930's Smith had become the most successful star in blues, and the highest paid Black performer in America!

"News of the completion of the first list of Black Swan records will be received with great interest and enthusiasm by our people all over the United States ... A great uproar was caused among white phonograph record companies who resent the idea of having a race company enter what they felt was an exclusive field."

-- Chicago Defender, May 7, 1921

Black Swan's first release was Ethel Waters 'Down Home Blues,' which sold over 100,000 copies in the first six months, making it a huge hit. Waters became the 5th Black woman in history to have made a record! In his mission to showcase Black excellence and the richness of Black culture, Pace also signed opera singer Revella Hughes and created one of the first recordings of a Black, classically-trained soprano. When he was not occupied with the running of the

record label, Pace also ran the Atlanta arm of the NAACP. Black Swan demonstrates a concrete link between the recordings Classic Blues Women and the organised black political activism of the era. I would argue that from the inception of Black Swan, Classic Blues Women were a part of a political agenda in the battle for racial equality. As Du Bois lectured at the NAACP's June 1926 convention: "All art is propaganda and ever must be... I do not care a damn for any art that is not propaganda!"

Black Swan was a key player in what is now known as The Harlem Renaissance, a Black cultural component of The New Negro Movement of the 1920's to mid 1930's. The Renaissance celebrated a blossoming of expression in Black literature, music, art, theatre, dance, and scholarship, and made a powerful statement of Black pride. Artists and intellectuals rejected racial stereotypes and embraced their African heritage. Black and white music fans would travel to Harlem to see celebrated Black classical, jazz and blues performers. Performers included Black Swan's roster as well as the Empress of The Blues, Bessie Smith.

> "Black Swan was a key player in what is now known as The Harlem Renaissance"

Philosopher Alain Locke was one of the most prominent Black queer writers of the Harlem Renaissance. Locke, a professor of philosophy at Howard University, defined the aesthetics of the Renaissance in his 1925 book The New Negro. His writing celebrated the arrival of a "New Negro" who would uplift Black art to new levels of achievement while advancing the struggle for civil rights. NAACP official W.E.B. Du Bois provided guidance, financial support, and literature to this cultural movement.

Just as Motown artists provided a soundtrack to the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s, I would argue that Black Swan Artists did the same in the early years of the Harlem Renaissance. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, Classic Blues Women including Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, Gladys Bentley, Victoria Spivey, Ma Rainey, and Trixie Smith continued to provide a fitting Classic Blues accompaniment to the political landscape of the New Negro Movement, long after Black Swan disbanded in 1923.

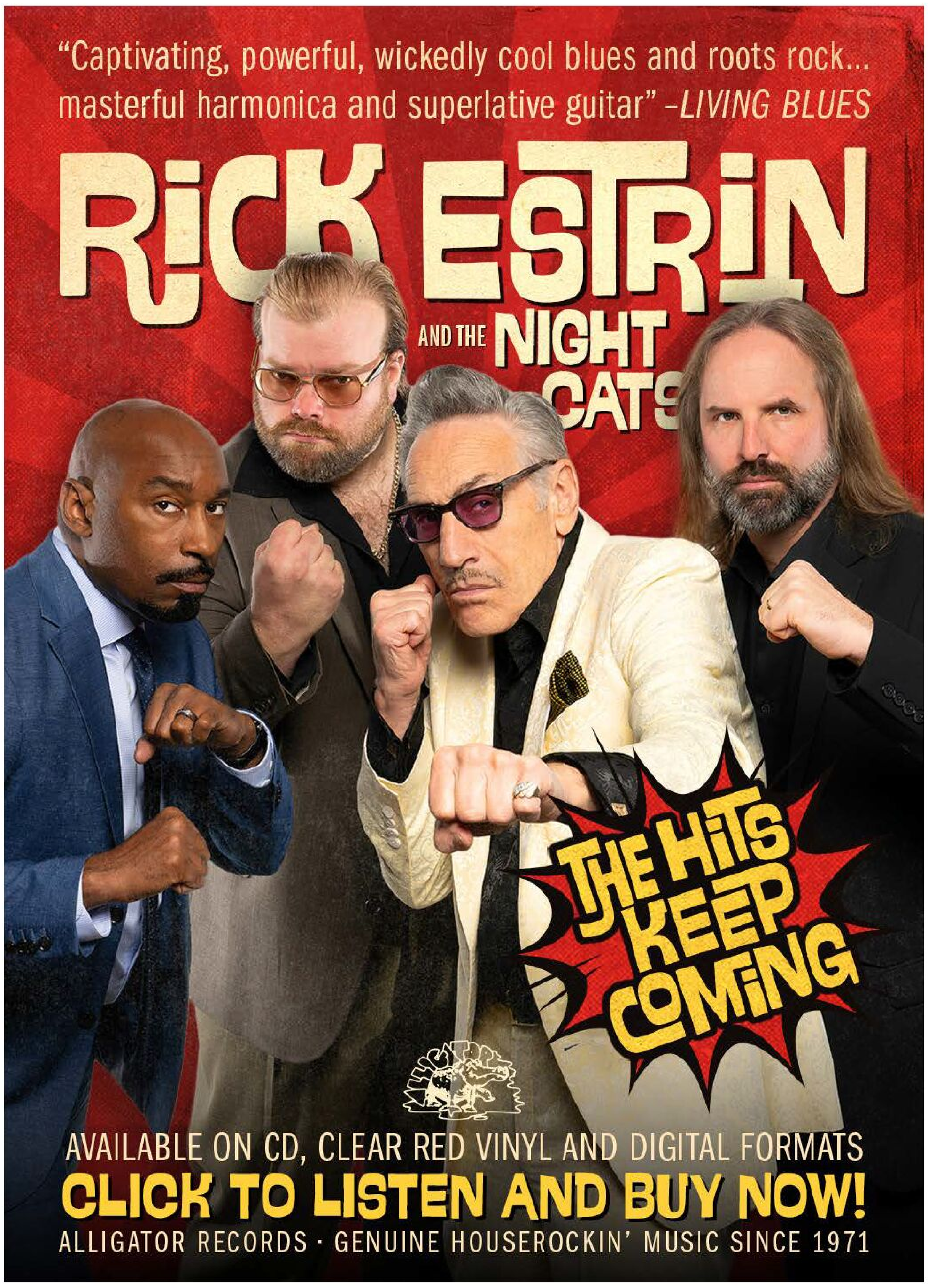
In 1929, Walter White joined the NAACP as Chief Secretary. A fan of Blues and Jazz Music, he organised a groundbreaking benefit concert for the NAACP in 1929 which would feature blues artists Clara Smith and Alberta Hunter as well as Jazz artists including Duke Ellington. White's primary goal at the NAACP was to achieve the abolition of Lynching with a drive for the enactment of a federal anti-lynching law. White called upon Classic Blues Women, whom he knew could rely on to pull a big crowd, to help raise the funds for his anti-lynching campaigns. In the 2019 book Rethinking American Music, Scholar Todd Decker explains how this was a hugely successful interracial event with top white and Black popular entertainers sharing the bill. I would like to highlight the significance of these Classic Blues Women who were aligning their artistry with a political cause to mobilise social change.

What is a shame is the classism that was associated with the NAACP at this time. The organisation was still predominantly run by Black intellectual elite with middle-upper class membership. Meanwhile, the Communist Party in America reached out to the black working classes. CPUSA were anti-racist and their ethos was aligned with the needs of working class Black communities. Despite this, membership to the party was low, because the Communists were viewed as un-American and were often painted as the enemy who could not be trusted. The last thing Black people needed was to be targeted for being a communist on top of the racism they experienced.

In March 1931, nine African American teenagers were falsely accused of raping two white women on a train near Scottsboro, Alabama. Their case became a national sensation, highlighting racial injustice in the American legal system. The injustice of 'the Scottsboro boys' triggered the blues and jazz artists of the era to become politically active.

In June 1931, the National Committee for the Defense of Political Prisoners (NCDPP) was formed, led by the Communist Party of the United States of America. The organisation was influential in defending the Scottsboro Boys in Alabama. In his book 'The Black Cultural Front', scholar Brian Dolinar describes how WC Handy, the self-proclaimed Father of The Blues, became honorary chairperson of the Scottsboro Unity Defense Committee, a nonpartisan group intending to further awareness of the NCDPP's Scottsboro Boys campaign. To fund their work, the NCDPP hosted benefit concerts that featured performances by Classic Blues artists including Alberta Hunter and Bessie Smith. Between the performances were speeches by Black communists.

For a decade, Bessie Smith and Alberta Hunter had recorded and performed original music, pointing a finger at social wrongs from the perspective of Black, working-class women. Here, Classic Blues evolves into a powerful force for change. These artists were not just singing about social injustices; they became politically mobilised, lending their voices to a movement that demanded social and political transformation. I think the importance of this has been overlooked in music history. It is well documented that Duke Ellington and the Jazz artists of the era used their platform as musicians to take a stand for civil rights. It is time to rewrite the history books to honor the Classic Blues Women who also made a significant contribution!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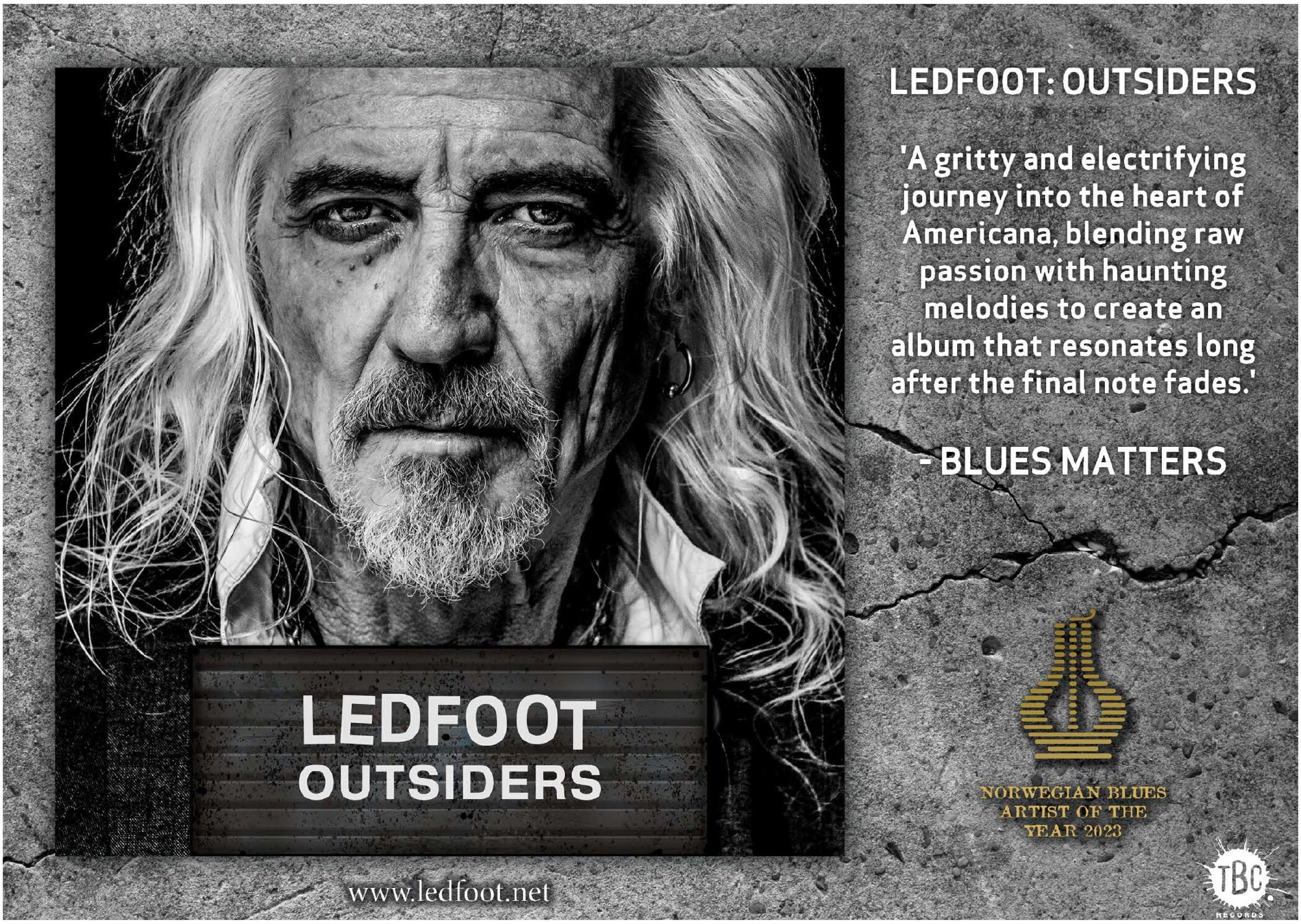
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'A gritty and electrifying journey into the heart of Americana, blending raw passion with haunting melodies to create an album that resonates long after the final note fades.'
- BLUES MATTERS
NORWEGIAN BLUES ARTIST OF THE YEAR 2023
TBC

AND THIS IS ME!

AN INTERVIEW WITH KATIE KNIPP

Blues Matters caught up with Katie Knipp at her home in Sacramento with her newly adopted dog. Diving into the soulful world of blues-infused rock, Katie Knipp emerges as a captivating force in the music scene. With her powerhouse vocals, masterful command of the piano, and a knack for storytelling, she effortlessly weaves together narratives that resonate with authenticity and emotion.

Colin Campbell   Phil Kampel

Her music reflects the raw energy of the West Coast while embracing the timeless traditions of blues and roots rock. With a string of acclaimed albums and a dynamic stage presence, she continues to captivate audiences worldwide. Here we delve into her musical journey, creative process, and the inspirations behind her latest release, 'Me.'

"It all started in the fourth grade when I was playing clarinet. I remember lying on the floor listening to Rhapsody in Blue and just loving music in general. In the fifth grade they said I could only choose choir or band, I couldn't have both and I realized I really loved to sing, so that's when my singing kicked off!"

"Fast forward to high school, I began to teach myself piano at lunch every day in the choir room because we didn't have a piano at home and I didn't have lessons. Fast forward to college, I got a music degree in voice, in classical voice, which for the very first time ever, I put a little piece of it on the new record, it's almost hidden During college I got a record deal and they said, oh, we'll hire songwriters for you. But I began teaching myself guitar as well and writing my own songs on both guitar and piano. Then one day I looked through the mail slot of the door of the record label and all the furniture was gone. It was just cleared out. They didn't even call me to say, hey, this isn't working out, our company's folding, they just disappeared! But I got this great feeling inside when that happened, which if I could describe it as a visual, it would be when Jim Carrey got kicked out of a club in the movie Man on the Moon. He gets this look in his eyes like, yes, I'm on my way, and that inspired me to be a fierce, independent artist."

"Now I'm on my eighth commercially released album and it's been real fun to be able to be in charge of it all and to still be a good mom. My kids are seven and nine years old and it's been real fun. My parents were not musical, I was a rebel for doing all this in my family. All music and learning instruments were all just self-taught, self-generated. I went through a few traumatic events that inspired me to begin writing from a much deeper level. I definitely put a lot of thought into every single lyric. Even if it's a fictional story, I care a lot about the stories. I was exposed to a lot of music growing up, The Beatles, Beach Boys, classical music, you name it"

Knipp's love of blues started early, as she explains:

"It wasn't until high school when I first discovered blues, it was actually through Bonnie Raitt. I went back and looked into who she was inspired by, then I began listening to Muddy Waters and everybody from Stevie Ray Vaughan."

With more than a hint of multi-instrumentalist, I ask if Is there any instrument you can't play? :

"When you hear those lead-ripping solos on my new album, those are not me. That's Quinn Hedges on some songs and Chris Martinez on some songs. I mean, the slide is mine. The slide dobro and everything. But I definitely don't consider myself a virtuoso guitar player. I use it as

a songwriting tool. I take a few solos here and there with the slide, but nothing crazy because that wasn't my first instrument. My voice, to me, is my first instrument."

What about this great new album, 'Me':

"Well, some of these songs on the album have been simmering for a couple of years. I'm always slowly writing pieces of songs and I like to think of each song as its own house. So, when I go into the studio, I'm treating each one completely separate. I'm not trying to sound uniform across the board, as you can tell. When I came across the artwork from Barcelona, I actually used this image as a guide on continuing to wave my freak flag, be completely fearless and as edgy as I wanted to be. Any time I was stuck, this image would actually help me make a decision on a production thing. I had so much fun producing this. Pancho also produced with me. He's quite the heavy hitter in the industry. I was kind of worried about having too many slow songs on here, but then I remembered, okay, what matters the most is the most amount of heart and honesty first. So, if that means one more song is slower, then so be it."

How do you go into the process of actually producing, of writing songs?:

"I'm excited this is going on vinyl. I really like that the last song of side one, it ends with the cello and the piano and stuff. The way I went about the songs, I always keep a notebook, or if I don't have a notebook, I use the notes app in my phone for any time a lyric comes to mind, I put it in there. Then when I have a moment, I sit at the piano and I come up with little motifs and chord progressions that might fit around the mood of a story piece from the lyrics. And I really feel like a song isn't ready until I can perform it by myself. Then I present it to the band. So, I had all of these songs done. And I would send just a raw recording of a solo performance of it to my drummer, to my bass player, let them simmer with it for a while, come up with parts they felt would fit, then we would get together and rehearse and try them out."

"They're so good at what they do that usually the first thing that came to their mind was the right fit. So, it was really exciting to get together and hear them, because I'm not a drummer, I don't have a degree in bass, so I have a high level of respect for what they do. It's real fun to let them come up with their own things and just make it all work. Once we record the raw tracks in the studio, just drums, bass, guitar, piano, vocals, that's when I feel the playground starts! That's when I feel like I'm on a trampoline. So, for example, on Devil's Armchair, those harmony stacks that I created were a very last-minute thing. Those ended up being kind of the hook of the song. There was another song where my engineer was like, OK, so are we going to do three-part harmony on this? And I said, oh no, we're doing seven! So, I was able to score everything out beforehand. I love doing harmony stacks in the studio. Bob Daspit mixed it he's Sammy Hagar's engineer along with Hans Zimmer. So, we got some star treatment as far as post-production as well."

"I don't feel genuine about singing most songs unless I've written them myself"

With so many underlying influences and widespread musical admiration, I ask about her style> Knipp responds instantly with a smile:

"My style is simply art and sometimes it comes out bluesier and sometimes it comes out jazzier and sometimes it comes out Americana. The most important thing, again, is how honest I am in the moment! I go into everything not trying to fit my music style into a particular box. My good friend, Mick Martin, who plays harmonica on Outlaw Dogs said, "I feel sorry for any publicist or reviewer that has to review this because it's all over the place! Americana is really just roots music born from blues and bluegrass. I feel like Bonnie Raitt is the first commercially released Americana artist. At the time she first came out, they didn't have the Americana category. But now she fits in that category almost more than blues. When you listen to her records, there's all kinds of different styles on there, which I really appreciate. She was an influence on my music style, likewise Lucinda Williams. She's such a fantastic writer. I don't feel genuine about singing most songs unless I've written them myself. It's just part of that whole desire to be honest and communicate with other people.

For further information see website: **katieknipp.com**

LISTEN STATION

- OH WELL
- KILLING FLOOR

“My style is simply art and sometimes it comes out bluesier”

FORTY YEARS AND COUNTING

LIL' ED AND THE BLUES IMPERIALS

Tim Arnold   Laura Carbone

Of the few legendary bands that have been together 40 years or more, only two of them really play any blues – The Rolling Stones and Santana. And neither one of them has been able to hold on to their original members for that long. Life happens. The blues happen.

Except for one.

Lil' Ed and The Blues Imperials are the rare exception, and these four soul brothers absolutely tore down the house at the 29th annual Tampa Bay Blues Fest. Lil' Ed Williams

and his half-brother James "Pookie" Young put together the first incarnation of the Blues Imperials back in 1975, and were playing Chicago juke joints and bars before Ed was even of legal drinking age. But back then they needed to hang on to their day jobs – Ed worked 10-hour days at the Red Carpet Car Wash, Pookie drove a school bus - so they could jam tiny clubs around town at night and split their $6 take four ways.

"J.B.'d come over to the house and play for the family," Ed's reminiscing with me over beers in his trailer after his Blues Fest performance. "And he'd oZer us encouragement, show me some guitar licks, help us along the way."

He's talking about J.B. Hutto – his uncle - a legendary Chicago blues man who played his wicked slide guitar and sung his guttural vocals into the Blues Hall of Fame years later. He gave up the blues for eleven years after a woman at one of his gigs broke his guitar over her husband's head. But he was back at it in the mid-60's. It wasn't long before Lil' Ed and Pookie were into the music, and Uncle J.B. and his re-upped mojo were there to help.

"J.B was back in the business then, in the early '60's, and I ain't even a teenager yet, and he's out there in our backyard with some fellas, playin his guitar and singing some blues.

No drummer, so J.B.'s got garbage can lids on his feet and he's stompin' the rhythm!" And Lil' Ed's looking down at all of this from their upstairs back porch. And he's done gone. "Pretty soon I've got a little local band playin some neighborhood joints." "You've got a hell of a family tree," I'm saying. "Pookie, J.B. …"

"Every older member in my whole family had something to do with music. My auntie, my mom, my great auntie, they were singin' in church every Sunday with my uncle J.B. and my other two uncles. My oldest uncle, he was in love with Howlin' Wolf, he would have J.B. to play old Howlin' Wolf stuZ, and he tried to sing with 'em. Couldn't. But, he sung gospel. My family would sing gospel Sunday mornin's, then J.B. would come over that evenin' and we'd do the blues.

"That's the way we grew up."

Bruce Iglauer, founder of Alligator Records, gets wind of

Lil' Ed and The Blues Imperials and their roof-raising gigs over on Chicago's west side and invites them into his studio to record a track for an upcoming compilation album. And before they left they had recorded a full album's worth of blues, soon released as Roughhousin' (Alligator, 1986).

One of the songs on Roughhousin' is Car Wash Blues. "My boss tells me, you a minute late I gonna take an hour oZ …". He was still working at the Red Carpet Car Wash! "That's why I made it," Ed tells me. And his boss loved it – despite being called a 'mean old man' in the song. "He wanted everybody to know he was mean."

Ed was dedicated to keeping J.B.'s spirt alive, and still is. It's why you'll see him wearing one of his tall African Kufi fez''s, he calls them, just like the ones J.B. wore. "He always told me it was an African thing. For me, it's J.B."

Since 1989 (with a seven-year break) Mike Garrett and his wailing guitar have been pouring petrol on Ed's bonfires, and drummer Kelly Littleton been stoking those fires with his energizing rhythmic sticks.

Lil' Ed and his Blues Imperials spun out nineteen tunes at the Blues Fest. Most of them original, with his pleading slide work and deep blues, string-bending fueling his soulful, rough-edged vocals. All of it as real as Chicago blues gets.

They kick it oZ with Help Me (What You See is What You Get, Alligator, 1992), and there's no turnin' back. Soon he steps aside for Mike and a blistering, brotherly solo, face to face. And then he dials down the pace and dials up the mojo with his I Gotta Check My Baby's Oil and they've got 5,500 witnnesses by their dip sticks. "I gotta check my baby's fluids … her transmission seems to be movin real slow. I got the throttle wide open, seems like the little

girl just don wanna go. She's actin' mighty funny, she must be goin out with another man…".

And then he leaves no doubt with a searing slide solo.

"I believe, I believe, I believe … she's goin' out with another man ….!"

The emotional rhythm this boy brews takes all of us on a journey. Ain't no turnin' back. And nobody wants a way back. We just want more. "It's what we do. It ain't nothin' planned, it's just what we do."

We get it. And to make sure, Lil' Ed comes down oZ the stage and walks through the crowd with a long solo, wrenching every drop of soul out of his Epiphone axe, drenching the crowd with it.

And then back up on stage with the Blues Imperials with a shout out to the audience...

"How y'all doin'? You still with me?"

Hell yes. We are. And just to make sure here comes another one of his classics...

"I want an older woman … she knows how to treat a man. A younger woman just don't understand. You don't have to worry … she knows just what to do … she knows how to stimulate you buddy, from your toes up to your head …"

"Man. Your set was laid out just perfect," I tell him later.

"Ain't no set list," is Ed's response. "I go from the top of my head. I feel it. We play it."

Mike says, "Yeah, we just look over at Ed. No call outs. He starts another one and we jump on it. We feel it. Soon as he does."

"They thrive oZ what I give 'em," adds Ed. "Whatever I give 'em, they take it."

And they don't stretch out their songs with endless jams. "We ain't no disco …" Smack on, which is how they can get such a wide range of their jump and shout tunes in a 90-minute set.

"Mike and me, we brothers," from Ed. "Pookie, we're half-brothers our whole lives. And Kelly. We're family for almost 40 years.

"When we got Kelly for his first gig with us, he shows up with this little Rogers drum set... a 20 inch bass drum, a 12 inch floor tom and a 14 inch kick drum – kid size, like toys. So damn small!" "Yeah, they all laughed at my kit when I brought it in, " Kelly remembers. Ed again, "and then we kick oZ and he's playing so loud I can't believe that shit! We've got ourselves a drummer!"

"Any plans for a new album?"

"We're working on one now. I've been in conference with Bruce (Iglauer), on some studio sessions." It's been 8 years since The Big Sound of Lil' Ed and The Blues Imperials (Alligator Records, 2016) was released. "Later this summer. We got about 40 songs, all original.

And a J.B. song. I always include one of J.B.'s.

"Comin' up in Chicago, we'd go out, dance all night. Do the huckle buck. We'd get a set up: a pint, two glasses, some ice and some Coke-Cola. Come home next mornin', break open another bottle."

"And that's the blues. Blues is about life. Stories about real life. Somedays I'd walk around home in my pajamas all day, get down in the basement and write a little bit. Then my wife would get home from work and say, 'What have you been doin?' And I'd say, 'I don't know …,' except I was writin some blues."

And Saturday night at the Tampa Bay Blues Festival Lil Ed and The Blues Imperials took us back to those days, closing their set with "Whiskey Flavored Tears," and the spirit of Elmo James is ghosting right there with Ed and his moaning slide, begging for more …

"Drinkin' and cryin'…

"I was feelin' mighty low …

"Woke up this mornin' and there was tears on my pillow.

"Cried myself a river …

"Cause my baby she had another man in my bed."

Forty years and counting …

Ain't nothin' like the blues.

MOMENT OF TRUTH

THE RED
CLAY STRAYS

HAILING FROM THE HEART OF THE DEEP SOUTH...

...the Red Clay Strays are a powerhouse collective of musicians whose music resonates with the soulful essence of their Alabama roots. With a sound as rich and diverse as the Southern landscape itself, this dynamic band weaves together elements of country, rock, blues, and Americana to create a sound that is unmistakably their own.

Colin Campbell   Supplied

From the twang of the guitar strings to the raw emotion in the vocals, each note they strike and every lyric they sing tells a story deeply rooted in the traditions of the South, yet infused with a modern edge that speaks to audiences far and wide. With their infectious energy and undeniable talent, the Red Clay Strays are a musical force to be reckoned with, leaving an indelible mark on the contemporary music scene. Blues Matters caught up with them, various topics were discussed including their inaugural tour of the UK.

Drew and Brandon's journey in music began in 2015 when they met, with Drew initially taking on the roles of manager and booking agent for their cover band. Despite his managerial duties, Drew remained committed to the music, attending every rehearsal, and showcasing his talents as a guitarist and vocalist. The transition from manager to performer was gradual, with Drew's apprehension evident in the early days of performing live.

Reflecting on their humble beginnings, Brandon recalls: "I was scared to death. Now I'm just a little more confident in it."

Their dedication led them to embark on a journey across the Gulf Coast, playing gigs for minimal pay, often relying on tips to cover expenses. Brandon reminisces:"We depended on the tip bucket for gas money," highlighting the financial challenges they faced as aspiring musicians.

Determined to expand their horizons, they launched a crowdfunding campaign to purchase a touring vehicle, ultimately opting for a shuttle bus due to its affordability and spaciousness.

Their quest for a reliable tour bus encountered setbacks, with their initial purchase breaking down on the same day of acquisition. Undeterred, they improvised by using car batteries to power their journey back home, a testament to their resourcefulness and resilience in the face of adversity. Despite the challenges, they persevered, eventually acquiring a functional tour bus, and continuing their musical pursuits on the road.

Brandon's transition from aspiring football coach to musician was unexpected, catalysed by his encounter with Drew and their mutual passion for music.
Reflecting on his journey, Brandon acknowledges the transformative power of music: "I thought my whole purpose, my whole life was football... And once we met, Drew and I, the more and more I got into music. I started realizing I could write."

Drew's musical influences trace back to his upbringing, rooted in country music and nurtured by exposure to artists like Stevie Ray Vaughan and Guns N' Roses. His eclectic taste, spanning genres from country to southern rock and blues, shaped his identity as a musician. Despite initial doubts about his musical direction, Drew found solace and purpose in music, acknowledging: "I still kind of look at myself in the mirror when I have a cowboy hat on or something like that. I'm like, what are you doing, man? I wonder all the time where it all came from, and it can only be God. Really, but it's crazy. Brandon has a way cooler or interesting take on how he came into it. But I've always been like a country southern rock blues guy, and I guess that's just kind of made me who I am as a player."

Brandon's musical journey began with a childhood fascination for music, sparked by family gatherings where he marvelled at guitar-playing relatives. Reflecting on his lifelong passion, he explains:

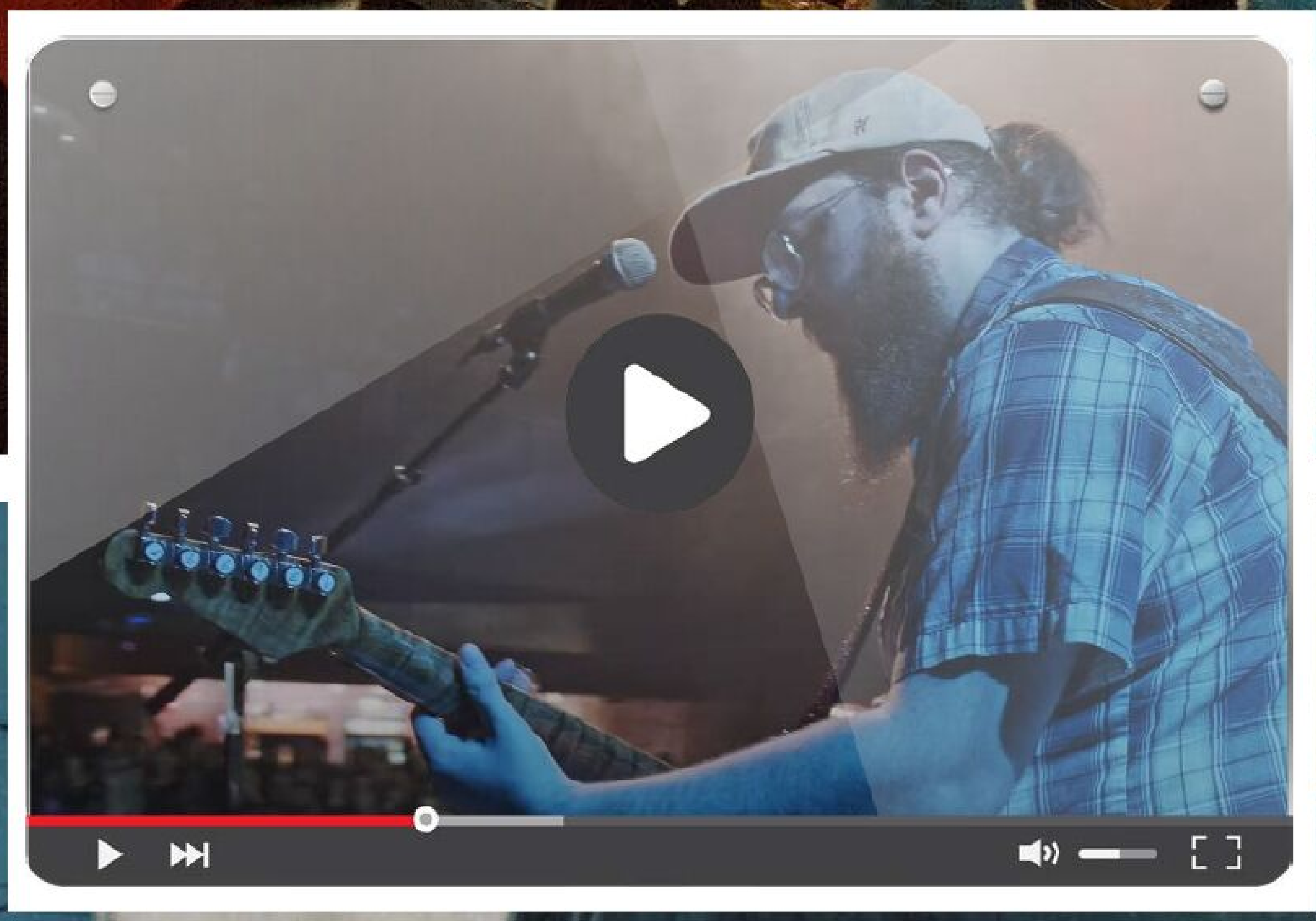
"Music's just always been something I've set out to try to make." From early experiences of making music by beating on desks at school to forming bands throughout high school."

Brandon's unwavering dedication to music shaped his path, as he explains: "I've always had it in my head that I

wanted to play music. I sang in a choir at High School I already knew a little bit about singing anyway! Not the technique but knew how to sing in key! I grew up playing drums in church also picking and playing the guitar and piano. I learned to play with other musicians, going to church with my grandmother and my brother. Although my family were not really musical My mom listened to more of the popular Christian and my dad listened to Lynyrd Skynyrd...Waylon Jennings, George Jones, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. I got quite a mixture of styles of music I like music, anywhere from the 30s to today's music styles."

We discuss musical styles of the band. There seems a consensus by both artists.
Rock and roll is the base but there are also country elements but not country rock as such, they have a more eclectic style. Brandon calls it 'non-denominational rock and roll.'

Drew chimes in: "I love the blues, man. One thing I miss about early bar gigs is playing a lot of blues songs like Reconsider Baby. Maybe, we'll make a blues album one day. We love Delta and hill country blues. Cedric Burnside's dad was a legend, keeping it alive. Black Keys, keeping blues alive. Junior Kim-



brough; melodic blues stuff. It just feels authentic. That's where we get our sound from. Blues is everything, it's all about the feel. It's some of the best music to play, the base of all music."

We talk about venues and festivals; they have sold-out tours and are philosophical when talking about preferences and audiences:

"Too intimate can get uncomfortable sometimes because it's like you start to feel like you're under a microscope. Just people there not cheering, they're just silently clapping and just staring at you. But just getting to play our full set at one of our shows, there's nothing better than that. We're just able to play all of our music and put on however long or loud a set we want to do. There's always the best crowd reaction at our shows. getting to play in front of people is everything to us, because it's that feedback loop of that energy that we're putting out there and they're loving it. If they're loving it, we're putting it even harder out there. And, you know, that's our drug and addiction."

Brandon alludes to being different offstage than onstage; "If I'm around strangers or people I don't know, I'm the quiet one. I don't talk or interject or try to go and start conversations with people. I try to be as unnoticed as possible, even though I'm six foot six, and that's kind of hard! When I'm on stage performing, I have to engage the crowd and address them. Sometimes I play shows and I get off the stage and I think, man, that was a horrible show. The crowd hated us. that was terrible, and then, I get feedback from my team and look at social media posts for the night and, like, everybody's eating it up and loving it. I had no idea. Then sometimes, we pick up on a great crowd and know exactly that they're loving it and eating it up. When we know that they're loving it, it makes us love it. It's easy for us to get into it and get lost in it and put on a better show."

And what does success mean to them?:

"We've always just said, as long as we can pay our bills and take care of our families, that's successful. We've been paying our bills for a while. So, we've ,honestly in my opinion, been successful since you know we started in 2017."

Is there a songwriting process?

They explain it this way: "I'll get on like a streak where I'll write for weeks or months and I'm, like, unstoppable. And then... It might be six months and I won't write another song. Sometimes, every year I'll go up to Nashville for a week with Brandon and Matthew. For the last couple of years, we've gone together, and we'll write 1 or 2 songs a day with another person just to get that creative flow going again. Matthew is the same way as I am. Brandon writes too. Don't let him lie to you! But Matthew will write songs and then just send them to Brandon. Brandon is usually the first person I send them to, because if he doesn't like it, then what's the point? Then we just get to that point, if he likes it, then we'll throw it in practice or whatever recording session we're at and see if the producer likes it or we like it and just work it up."

We turn to the newest release Moment Of Truth - and one song in particular…
'Wondering Why': Me and Brandon linked up with a guy named Dan Couch, writing about my wife, who was my girlfriend then. I felt unworthy of her. Living pay cheque to pay cheque, playing in bars. Women sticking with us, wondering why. We built the song together, equally. It stemmed from that topic."

What advice motivates them:

Brandon goeson to explain the best advice he had in his musical career was from Lazer Lloyd, who said 'Play and pray as much as possible.'

This seems to be the band's mantra, as Drew adds: "A part of our success, is just understanding dynamics. When you're creating music and knowing when to build up and come down and build back up again or change a groove just so it feels a little bit different that's been it for me. Just understanding where you need to pop in and out or not at all."

Their shared journey is a testament to the transformative power of music, transcending barriers, and reshaping lives. From humble beginnings in a cover band to traversing the country in a makeshift tour bus, Drew and Brandon's story embodies the spirit of perseverance, passion, and the unwavering pursuit of their musical dreams. As they continue to navigate the highs and lows of the music industry, their journey serves as an inspiration to aspiring musicians everywhere, reminding them that with dedication and determination, anything is possible.

They are looking forward to playing a UK and European tour soon and share the same vision for this. Brandon finishes the conversation: " I never thought we'd ever get to go to Europe let alone play there".

This is a band to watch out for, big in America, now the world is theirs to explore and take to even more audiences.

For further information see **redclaystrays.com**

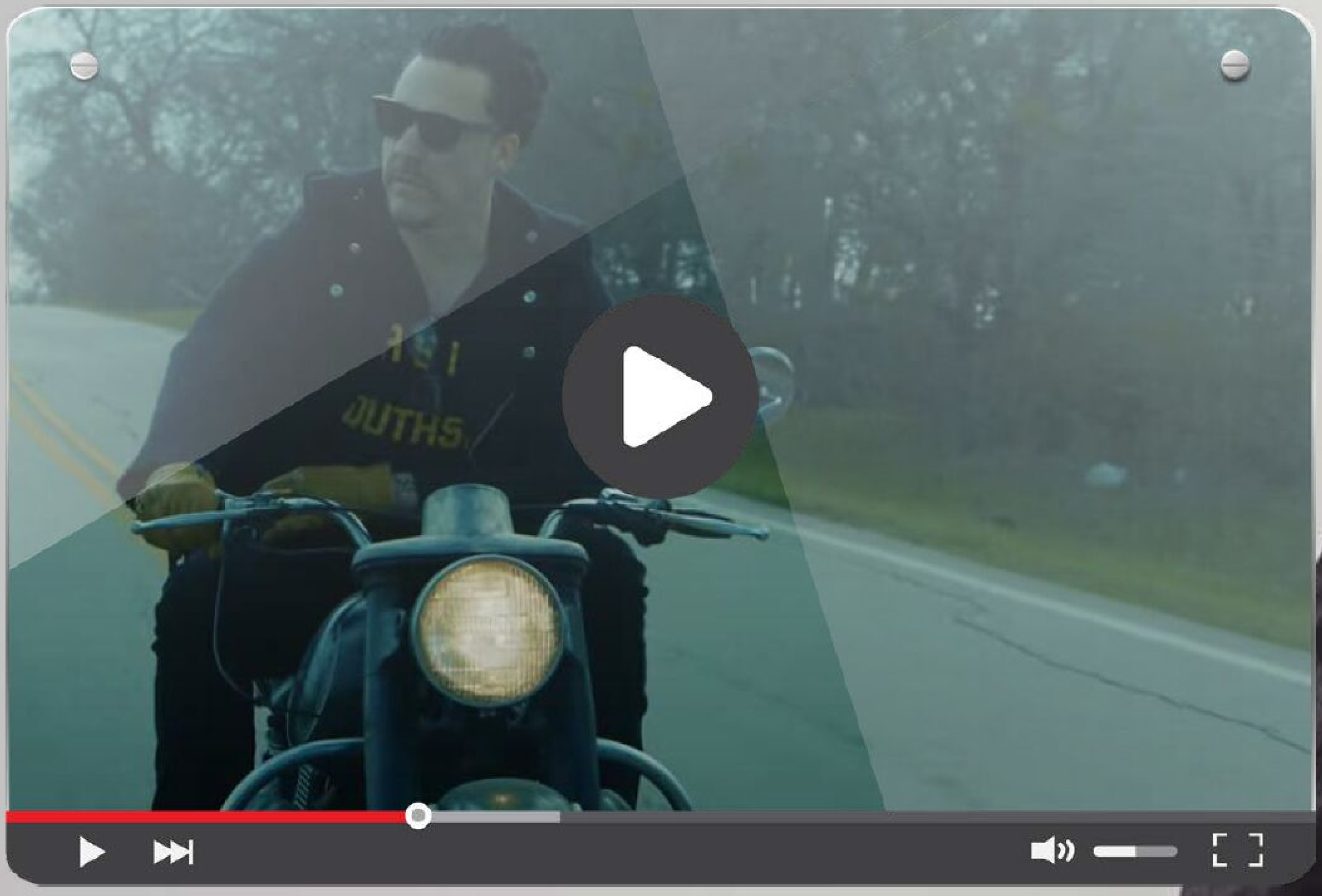
"Blues is everything, it's all about the feel"

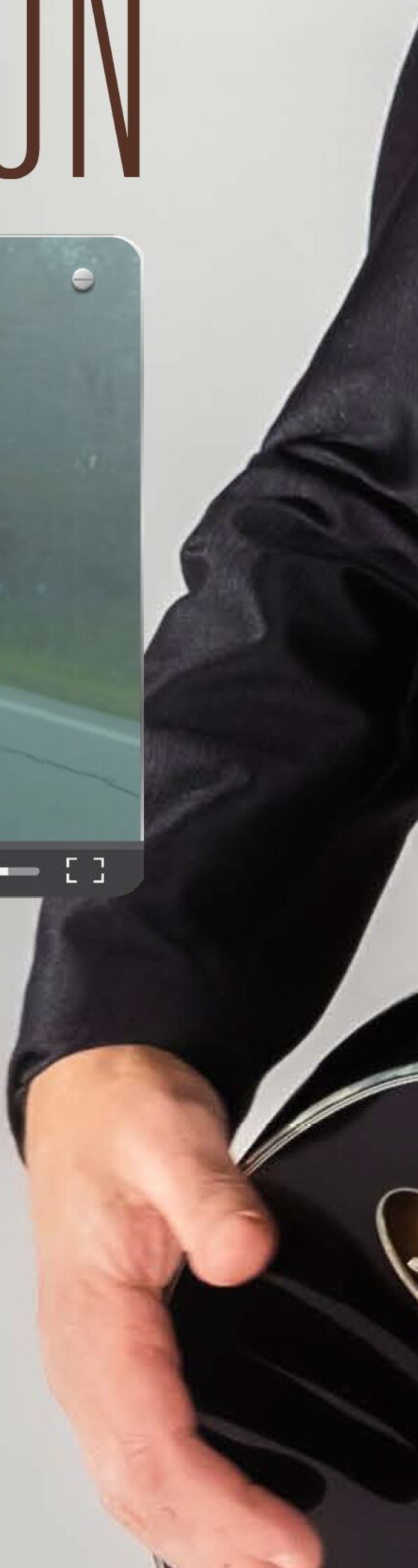
LISTEN STATION

- WONDERING WHY
- STONE'S THROW

THE HARD WAY

JESSE DAYTON





Jesse Dayton was born and raised in Austin, Texas, a musical melting pot that attracted so many genres. Blues, Soul, Country, you name it, it could be found on the border of Texas and Louisiana. An actor, a musician, a musicologist, there are many ways in which to describe Jesse Dayton. I had the chance to catch a glimpse into what makes him tick, his influences, and where he sees himself in 2024.

Stephen Harrison Supplied

Jesse was spending some time back at home in Austin, Texas, something that he doesn't get to do much at the moment due to recording and touring, as he explains:
"My family are from the Texas/Louisiana border, we're 7th generation Texans, we are just about as Texan as you can get, we are like the oil, the ranches, the cattle, the whole damn thing. I'm a total music nerd, a total record collector, and with all the rock music, it was the soundtrack to our lives."

"For me, even though I grew up with all this colloquial music, it was regional, I grew up with twenty-four hours of French-speaking radio shows. We had every genre of music at our fingertips all day long. Every weekend there would be Zydecco Festivals, far more than in Shreveport, Louisiana. So, even across the border back in Texas, there were lots of French Catholic churches with some fantastic musical artists attached to them. Rhythm and Blues were huge, right up until the late 80s, there were black-owned Rhythm and Blues Radio stations. There were full-on Honky Tonk Radio Statios, not just Country Stations, where they would play this easy-listening Nashville kind of stuff, I'm talking about Pedal Steel Guitars and all this great western stuff, It was amazing."

I told Jesse that here in England, especially in the '60s and '70s, we had nowhere near the choice of radio stations he could access in Texas. On this side of the pond, we had Radio 1 and if you were lucky, Radio Luxembourg, where you might hear the odd Led Zeppelin tune, or if you were really lucky, a Blues tune. I can vividly remember listening to the Saturday Rock Show on Radio 1 hosted by Alan Freeman, and almost losing my mind when he played two tracks from Presence by Led Zeppelin. It was as if I'd died and been transported to musical heaven. So to chat with an artist who has all these fantastic stories to relate was manna from heaven. It cemented our mutual understanding of Blues and Rock music from the '60s and '70s more than I would have thought possible.

"I'll always love British music, Led Zeppelin, The Rolling Stones, The Stones are my favourite Rock and Roll band of all time, I've been lucky enough to see them 28 times, they are getting better with age. I grew up in this small town where everything was sort of blinkered, if you liked Led Zeppelin, you couldn't like The Clash, and if you liked The Clash, you would hate Led Zeppelin. I'm a total Zeppelin freak, all things Page. Nowadays kids are into everything, there were scenes back then, in places like Austin, Los Angeles, New York, and Nashville. For me, I was kind of like blindly into what I was into, but surprisingly that helped me because I got to play with so many people from so many different genres."

"I think America owes a great debt to British Musicians. I love Rock and Roll music, could I hear Freddie King when I was listening to Jeff Beck, of course, I could hear all of that stuff, but I didn't start with the early Blues stuff, I'd heard, I'm Going Down by The Jeff Beck Group before I'd heard, I'm Going Down by Freddie King. For a while there, I was obsessed with Jeff Beck, it was insane. There were also other players that my friends were open enough to hear. I loved James Burton, and he was a huge influence on me, he'd played with Elvis, Johnny Cash, and Merle Haggard, and he was from Shreveport, Louisiana so there was a lot of Jerry Reed stuff going on. I don't think the rock fans quite understood how good he was, and he certainly wasn't riding around in limousines like the modern-day rock stars. If you listen to old interviews with Led Zeppelin, they were listening to Country music, Folk Music, they were listening to stuff that would drive their fans nuts. That's one of the reasons they did that song Hot Dog because they'd been listening to Buck Owens.'"

"I was obsessed with Jeff Beck"

As we chat, our reminisces twist and turn from Punk Rock, Waylon Jennings, and Heavy Metal, it's so absorbing to have a conversation that takes you to places that you don't expect to visit. This is the power of music, the world has opened up, but also, it also gives us all the opportunity to revisit stuff we listened to in our very early teens - stuff like, Thin Lizzy and Black Sabbath. When you chat about these bands, it's very refreshing to know that they still

have a place, these guys helped to open up a world of music for many of us.

Last year saw Dayton release Death Wish Blues, a duet album with Samantha Fish. The album continues to be extremely successful, culminating in a worldwide tour that sees them both playing in Australia in the very near future. I was intrigued as to how the two of them met, and where did the idea of the album come about.

“We’ve known each other for a long time, she was quite young when we first met. Samantha opened up for me in Kansas City, which is her hometown. She was probably about 19 years old. I was backstage, and I looked over at my tour manager, and I was like, ‘hey man,’ who’s playing guitar out there? He said you gotta go see, so I walked out and there was this young girl. She blew me away, I was thinking, if she keeps playing like this, something big is going to happen. And I was pleased that I got to hear the guitar playing before I knew whether it was a guy or a girl playing. For me, that’s a really good way to listen to Samantha. Let’s face it, there are a lot of new-age men who are losing their shit over Samantha Fish, she’s a star, and Samantha Fish is a great guitarist. We did some shows together where I opened for her, and my manager was like, are you sure you wanna do this? And I’m like, why not? We did sixteen months together on tour, non-stop, joined at the hip, promoting the album that we had recorded together. We are about to do the final part of the tour in Australia.”

After the success of Death Wish Blues, Jesse has been working on a brand new album, The Hard Way Blues. It’s a back-to-basics Blues album, head down great guitar, great vocals, the kind of album every Blues lover will adore - no surprise there.

“I did that record before me and Samantha recorded Death Wish Blues. That record was done by Shooter Jennings, he produced it. I first met him when he was about 1fifteen or sixteen. I was playing in a band with his dad. We were both playing in the Waylon Jennings band. Shoot forward 20 years or so, Shooter is this great producer, I don’t know how many Grammys he’s won. So, I wanted to make the record, I called him up, and he was, like,’ yeah, let’s do it.’ We made that record old-school, we went into a studio in Los Angeles, it was old-school studio, and we banged it out in five days. There were very few overdubs we left a lot of the vocals on there. It was me, the drummer and keyboard player in the studio the whole time. It just blows my mind when you think back to the first Black Sabbath album was recorded in just two days, two days man.”

Jesse Dayton is an artist who has paid his dues, an artist who has learned from the best. Humble, and knows where the Blues belong and from whence it came. The Hard Way Blues is a testament to that. A fitting album for a very talented singer-songwriter and performer.

LISTEN STATION

- **BORN WITH A TAIL**
- **I’LL BE THERE**
- **DEATHWISH**

56 Hotels
We
Love
by Andrew Nelson

THE MAVERICKS

HERE THEY COME AGAIN!

Ancient mariners navigated and astrologers continue to predict the future by them, there is no doubt that the stars above us have an influential, practical, mystical and seemingly infinite force.

Paul Davies Alejandro Menendez

By the same code, the ebb and flow of the Earth's oceans is forever influenced by the magnetic pull of the moon as is, some say, our emotions. From time immemorial, musicians have been emotionally inspired by the moon and the stars in the sky at night to get their mojo working and create. And so have The Mavericks who are back on the scene with their new album of tuneful emotional journeys, Moon & Stars. They have mapped out an album that touches upon all their musical compass points: Americana, Country, Latino, Rock, Tex Mex, Mariachi…in which some of the songs that were once shelved are now dusted down, re-tuned, completed and recorded for posterity on this bewitching album.

Detailing all this and more via his deep and resonant drawl on our zoom call from the band's tour bus motoring along to a show in Waukegan, Illinois, is The Mavericks' legendary frontman Raul Malo: "We've added a lot of songs from the new album, Moon & Stars, to the setlist, working them into the set as we go along." With a UK and European tour on the go, Malo tells me that the ongoing song selection will be a fluid affair: "We'll probably add as we go along. That's the plan. So far, we're playing about half the album and, slowly but surely, we'll eventually get to play all of them." He adds: "There's a lot of material to pick from and we certainly gotta play favourites and whatnot. It'll be a good balance as always."

With Moon & Stars being their new release of original band songs, unlike the novelty/covers theme of the three intervening albums: Hey! Merry Christmas!, Play The Hits and En Espanol, since 2017's Brand New Day, ever the raconteur, Raul tells me about the impetus behind the recording of this album: "We booked the studio time because we were on the road, anyways, and we wanted to get some recording done. I didn't necessarily have

that many songs, I had a couple of things, but nowhere near an album. So, I dug deep into the catalogue and found a demo to Moon & Stars. I always wanted to record that song but had never found the right time." Having been a Nashville native for some time, an act of god intervened that stemmed his creative flow: "The (Tennessee) flood of 2010 sort of derailed the creative process, to say the least, and these songs got put on hold and shelved." He continues: "Recent rediscoveries led to having them on this record. Like Moon & Stars, there's also a song that I wrote with Bernie Taupin, years ago, called The Years Will Not Be Kind that opens the album. It was fun going through some of these old songs and I'm glad that they've come back into my life. I think they make nice pieces of music on this album."

As ever with a Mavericks record there's a consummately delivered mix of musical styles. Moon & Stars is no exception to this rule as Raul explains: "I think, at this point, it's just where the muse hits. It's not like we started and said, 'let's record this type of song today'. It's whatever type of song we have that's ready to record. That's how we do it." Any band chemistry is cemented out on the road, and the band's rapport with each other came into play as he explains: "Luckily, at this point, the band is a pretty well-oiled machine because we've been touring consistently for the last several years so we're pretty good at it." He beams revealing his impressive white toothed smile as he states: "The band are pretty good at hitting my curveballs. That's what makes it fun for us and still keeps it interesting and keeps us on our toes, so to speak." Given their consistent touring schedule, I enquire as to where they found the time to record this album's smartly executed and infectious diversity of compositions: "It took about a year in different locations and studios which is not unheard of or too crazy. The most important thing for this record was the fact that we got to record in different studios and that made it fun." He furthers: "Recording in Louisiana, for example, has its own energy, its own vibrations, its own character. Same with recording in Santa Fe, New Mexico, that has its own character, its own geography, its own topography. The environment does inspire you. Those are two areas of the world where a lot of creativity has come out of those places, a lot of music, a lot of art, a lot of culture. I would say that they were an instrumental part of the making of this record. We all enjoyed that process tremendously." Raul visibly warms to the memories created during this peripatetic recording process: "The friends that we made and now know, those are new homes for us and made it really special and I would go back to those studios any day of the week. And we probably will..."

The Mavericks appear to be inveterate road rats at heart as their touring itinerary proves. Exotically attired onstage, their mastery of various musical stylings suggests that travel does improve and expand the mind. Raul Malo always relishes the prospect of playing across the UK and Europe: "I don't get to see as much as you think I would get to see, but it's always fun. Being in Europe travelling and visiting different cities, I'm lucky to have a day off in a nice city; that's an added bonus to explore a little bit and going to the cafes, having a nice meal or a cup of coffee that sometimes that's all you get out of a visit to a city. Honestly, sometimes that's all you need," says Malo. "That alone is worth the trip. I always look forward to travelling around as, tiring as sometimes touring may be, travelling around and getting to see the different cities is always special and there's always something new to see."

Bands are like personal relationships insofar as the heady thrill of new music and live shows reignites the original flame of passion. A hot ticket, the tide waits for no-one as a starry evening of quality songs is always guaranteed when **The Mavericks** hit town.

LISTEN STATION

- HERE YOU COME AGAIN
- COME UNTO ME
- ALL OVER AGAIN

THE OUTSIDERS

AN INTERVIEW WITH TIM SCOTT MCCONNELL (A.K.A. LEDFOOT)

Blues Matters recently chatted with Ledfoot at his home in Norway. He is a dynamic singer, songwriter, and guitarist, a force to be reckoned with in the contemporary rock and blues scene. With a gritty voice that carries the weight of experience and emotion, he captivates audiences with his raw, unfiltered sound. He brings an authenticity and passion that resonates with fans old and new. His journey through the music world is marked by a relentless drive to push boundaries and create music that speaks to the soul.

Colin Campbell PC Hornburg

Having just returned from a tour in the Netherlands, a country with a vibrant blues culture, I assume it was a winner:

"It was good, short and sweet and delicious! I did five shows in a row and came back home. It was my first time over there, except from touring with other bands, it was nice to get over and play."

Ledfoot continues, warming to the theme: "A couple of small theatres, a festival; that was in Groningen. Then one in a Community Centre, which was interesting. It was a club of sorts. I like playing both festivals and intimate venues. What I do lends itself to being intimate, but it's also nice to get in front of a big audience and surprise them! I still really enjoy playing live it's all part of being creative, if that's taken away it would be a lonely place! I'm sixty-six, I don't enjoy the travel as much as I used to, but I love to do shows."

I raise a question he's clearly used to answering, where does the moniker Ledfoot originate?

"It comes from driving too fast when I was a teenager. In the south that's what you call somebody who's a led foot, stepping on the gas! One of the things I always liked about being in the band was to be able to be a little bit anonymous, you know, because you were part of a group. It's just a little too weird for me to go around and look at my name fucking plastered up somewhere, you know! "

Why music, I ask?:

"When I was in my younger teen stuff, I was sick a lot and there was a couple of years where I couldn't really walk and eventually got a guitar. The first instrument I learned was a five-string banjo. This is where my technique on twelve string comes from. I moved around a lot when I was a kid, so. I was introverted, it was something that you could find a whole world by yourself in music. Until I was a teenager, it was my family's music from Tennessee and Virginia I listened to. Country music, like Johnny Cash. My grandfather didn't like high vocal male singers. He liked Marty Robbins, Tennessee Ernie Ford, those kinds of guys. My older brother's collection was an influence, he was five years older than me, but he was getting into the Rolling Stones and everything else that everyone was getting in those days. When I was sixteen, I started playing in bar bands and then, playing five 45-minute sets a night and no repeats. At the time, it was it was a pain in the ass. But I realised that helped me later in my songwriting. I went through a big folk phase and listened to early blues. I always loved guys playing solo. You go into all kind of wormholes when you're growing up and getting into music."

Known as a musical 'Gothic Blues' stylist, I'm puzzled by this description:

"It's a weird analogy, but when I say gothic, I was thinking more architecture than actual goth music, I don't really have an association with that. But I knew that it was a way to give the impression of a certain side of the blues. The genre blues to me is defined much more by emotional content than it is by a chord progression. It's your chance to howl at the moon, and do that internally, it's a catharsis. I spend much time thinking about what the fuck I do, to tell the truth; I just roll with it. I'm compulsive with my work these days, I don't really listen to much music at all by other people. I still have two kids at home, two boys, they kind of rule the stereo! My youngest, he's started playing music. When I released my record, I played in a record store, and I told him he could pick out, three records. He picked out 'Dark Side of the Moon,' the first Ramones record and some Rap guy. Being a musician as opposed to other professions I liken it to, if you've been a cook for long enough, you're not looking to go into other people's kitchens, you want to get right what you've learned.'

What's the best advice you've had in your career, I wonder?:

"Find another job, do something else! I think one of the trademarks of most people who get into my business is they are really bad at taking advice. I think the best advice I've ever gotten is the brick wall that I keep running into every day that I've gotten to know it better. You've just got to make sure that you do what you want to do. If you're going to go and play music seriously like performing and writing, then do it. If you're into it for other reasons, well you can be a pop star!" he says with a sharp laugh.

Any major influences, I next query?:

"Hank Williams taught me so much about songwriting.

When I was sixteen, I was into Woody Guthrie, and heavy shit like Roscoe Holcomb. With me, it's less about artists and more about certain songs just teach you so much. But you can take a song like 'I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry.' That just teaches you so much about songwriting and emotional content. This is more where I gravitate towards certain songs by artists, than maybe their whole repertoire."

"I'm not one of those guys who need an A4 legal yellow pad with a 3B pencil and all that shit. For me, just give me something to write on and give me a pen! I think that when you accept the fact that a whole lot about writing songs is simply hard work because you've really got so little to work with. You've got three and a half minutes to try to put together some kind of coherent message. Whether it's musically or lyrically, a lot is just finding the right combination for you. For a good song, as like a book and a movie, it must have a good beginning, a good middle, and a good end and some kind of twist! The beautiful thing about writing is some songs can be nothing more than an unfinished train of thought. I grew up on country and western and blues and most of those told a pretty simple story. I like simple stories; this leaves you so much room for irony and sarcasm and for anguish and for hope. This is my palette I'm using primary colours. But I could be colourblind! But, um. Songwriting is a really straightforward process; you're getting somebody to understand what you're trying to communicate in any other part of life. It's like you come in one night and you just tell a simple story of what happened that day, and you've got everybody completely enthralled in what you're saying, that's what a song is.

In an industry notoriously tough, would he reflect on his career choice a bit?:

"Stick with your guns. I think when you're young and getting into this business there are just so many things pulling at you. Inside of that context, trying to mature as an artist, you got to figure it out yourself. Your job is your fucking job, so learn to do it your way and just stay with that!"

We go on to discuss the making of the new release. He continues: "I think in the new record you can hear some of my Influences in the way we approach the record. I wrote a lot of songs for it. I made detailed demos because I wanted to do it quickly but wanted no bullshit. I just wanted it, to be three people singing together, dubbing, doubling their voice, not doing any of that, just three people singing. I wanted to use southern harmonies that I grew up with, more like country harmonies. So, I sent them all clear pictures of the songs, demo wise. We did all the recording in four days and then two days mixing it, and we went back and took the mix a little bit, maybe seven days in total. When you're collaborating with good guys, the sooner you capture what you're trying to do, the fresher you get."

"When I was a kid, I liked John Steinbeck a lot as a writer. When I started on this record, I wanted to make it my kind of core idea of songs as gunfighter ballads and murder ballads. I wanted to keep that vibe with a working-class stoicism. The ethos was, Yeah, I fucked up and that's the way it goes because I can't help it."

Track Talk

Dead Is Dead: I'm a morbid son of a bitch. This came from friends dying, basically. So, then you start to think about it yourself. I'm certainly not a religious man. That song is about the idea that, you'd better work hard to get what you want out of life because, that's all we really know is that we have. Not a happy song, but it's not depressing. I mean, the song's basically saying, go for it now. It'll be too late otherwise.

Turn Me Into You: This comes from that point in a relationship where you're realising that actually the person, they want is not you, what they want is a version of what they want you to be. Sometimes it's your parents who are trying to turn you into a version of them, sometimes it could be a girlfriend or a boyfriend trying to turn you into what they need in their life.

I Do Believe: This is just me being a sarcastic son of a bitch. I'm a big Bertrand Russell fan and guys like that. It's an ironic thing because, regardless of what anybody believes, they still like Christmas or still say God damn it. I've been there, I'm not sure about heaven, but I've been to hell.

The Outsider: This is about how through age, you become comfortable with that place, the corner becomes your home. I have gone up and down, in my career and in life in general. I've finally come to a place where I'm just happy to be on the ride, that's good enough for me.

Does he see the album as having a core theme?:

"Like I said, when I very first thought of this, one of my favourite records when I was growing up was Marty Robbins' Gunfighter Ballads. It had El Paso and stuff like that. I wanted to write a record the same way that record Gunfighter Ballads by him, all these songs about these fucking losers. I wanted to write a record that told those different kind of stories, different people's stories in that situation, in the same way that gunfighter ballads, did. I don't know if I can trust a man who doesn't have a few scars. I've been down there a few times just trying to get by. Not to compare life to a to a battle, but there is a side of it that is about survival. You fall down a lot, there's nothing wrong with falling down, but there's something so great about getting back up! All the songs are about these people saying, despite everything, I was trying to do better, I was trying to do my best! Sometimes doing something wrong is the best right you can do at the time!"

Any future projects on the burner, I ask as we wind-up our chat?:

"If we can get the band together, we're hoping for late fall or could be early next year for touring this album. I think we've got something going on in Germany now and in Benelux. I've had a few offers in England, Spain, and France, but it's got to be enough to make the trip, but we're trying to get it all together now. I just wrote some music for this TV series about Leonard Cohen and his girlfriend, Mary Ann. I just finished writing a song for that. Ronni Le Tekro and I are going to be doing another record in the fall. I've started on my next record for Ledfoot. I have the philosophy, if you ever stop running, then it's going to be hard to start up again so just keep going, I enjoy working. I wouldn't know what else to fucking do. I'll be doing it today, until I can't do it anymore. "

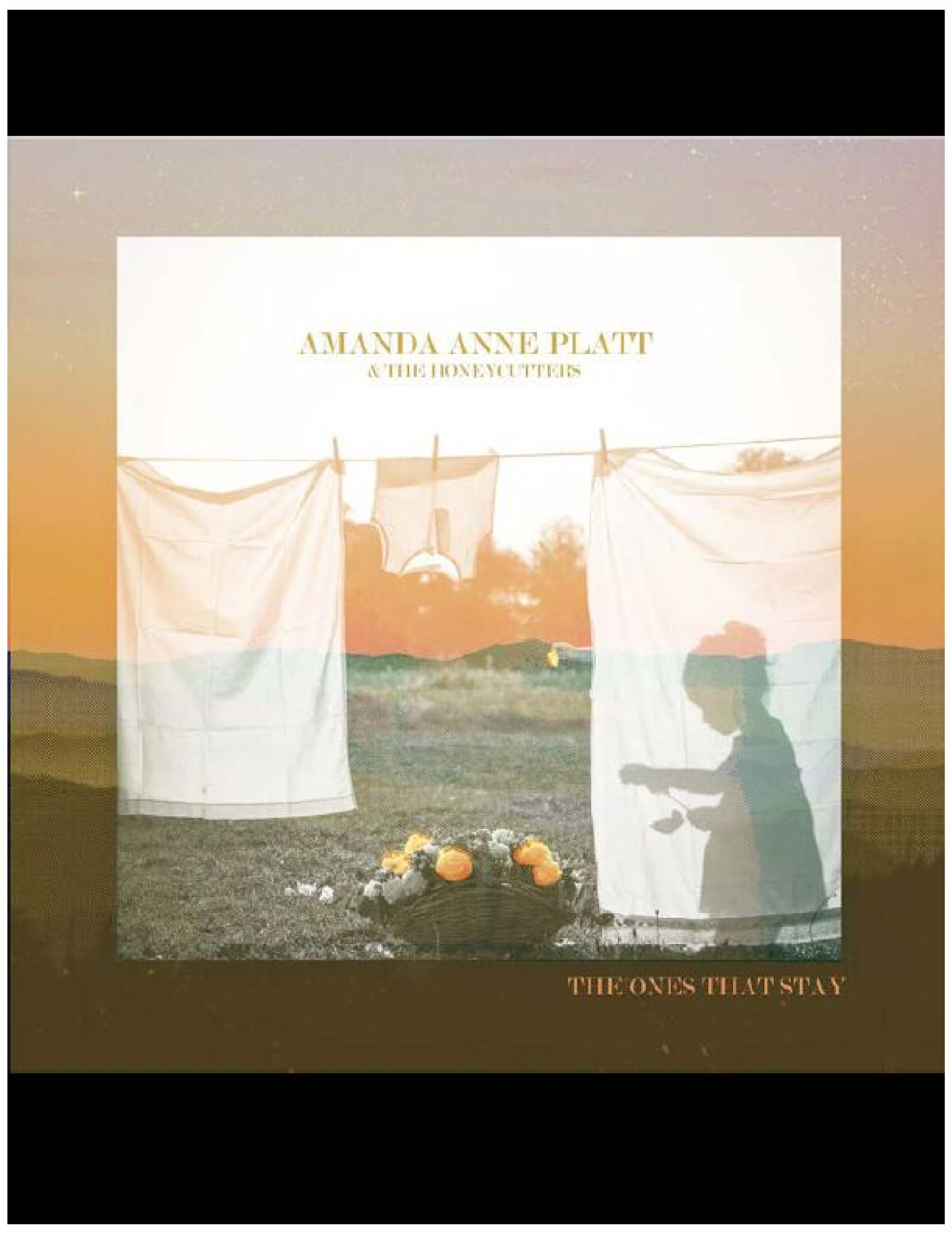
For further details see website: **www.ledfoot.net**

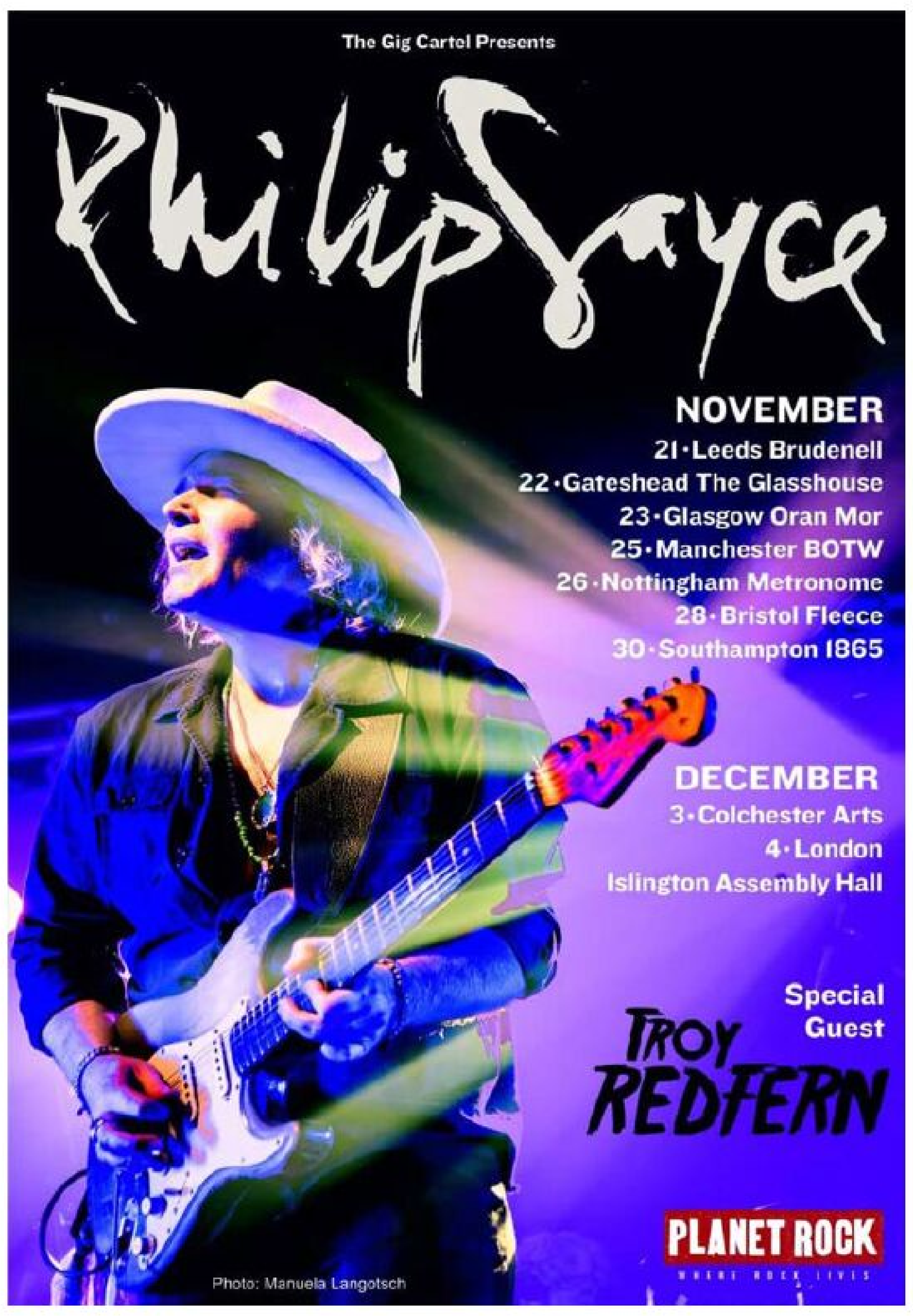
LISTEN STATION

- **THUNDER AND RAIN**
- **DESTINY**
- **I DO BELIEVE**

"I enjoy working. I wouldn't know what else to fucking do!"

SUPPORT **LIVE MUSIC** NEAR YOU





RMR TOP 50

ROOTS MUSIC REPORT'S BLUES ALBUM CHART

POS	ARTIST	ALBUM	LABEL
1	CHRIS O'LEARY	THE HARD LINE	ALLIGATOR
2	ROBERT FINLEY	BLACK BAYOU	EASY EYE SOUND
3	DANIELLE NICOLE	THE LOVE YOU BLEED	FOURTY BELOW
4	TINSLEY ELLIS	NAKED TRUTH	ALLIGATOR
5	TOM HAMBRIDGE	BLU JA VU	QUARTO VALLEY
6	COCO MONTOYA	WRITING ON THE WALL	ALLIGATOR
7	BOBBY RUSH	ALL MY LOVE FOR YOU	DEEP RUSH
8	PETER VETESKA & BLUES TRAIN	FULL TILT	BLUE HEART
9	BLACK PUMAS	CHRONICLES OF A DIAMOND	ATO
10	GHALIA VOLT	SHOUT SISTER SHOUT	RUF
11	KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD BAND	DIRT ON MY DIAMONDS, VOL. 1	MASCOT
12	JOE BONAMASSA	BLUES DELUXE VOL. 2	J&R ADVENTURES
13	SETH JAMES	LESSONS	QUALIFIED
14	BROTHERS BROWN	NOWHERE LEFT TO GO	WOODWARD AVENUE
15	CEDAR COUNTY COBRAS	HOMESICK BLUES	SELF-RELEASE
16	JOEL ASTLEY	SEATTLE TO GREASELAND	BLUE HEART
17	BOB CORRITORE	BOB CORRITORE & FRIENDS: PHOENIX BLUES RUMBLE	VIZZTONE
18	D.K. HARRELL	THE RIGHT MAN	LITTLE VILLAGE
19	SUE FOLEY	LIVE IN AUSTIN VOL. 1	SELF-RELEASE
20	NICK MOSS	GET YOUR BACK INTO IT!(FEAT. DENNIS GRUENLING)	ALLIGATOR
21	THE DIG 3	DAMN THE RENT	SELF-RELEASE
22	MITCH WOODS	FRIENDS ALONG THE WAY(DELUXE EDITION)	CLUB 88
23	BERNARD ALLISON	LUTHER'S BLUES	RUF
24	BRAD "GUITAR" WILSON	BUCKLE UP!	CALI BEE
25	KEVIN BURT	THANK YOU BROTHER BILL: A TRIBUTE TO BILL WITHERS	GULF COAST
26	FRANCK L. GOLDWASSER	WHO NEEDS THIS MESS!!??	CROSSCUT
27	JASON RICCI & THE BAD KIND	BEHIND THE VEIL	GULF COAST
28	JOHNNY RAWLS	WALKING HEART ATTACK	CATFOOD
29	PATTI PARKS	COME SING WITH ME	VIZZTONE
30	JENNIFER PORTER	YES, I DO	COUGAR MOON
31	TERESA JAMES & THE RHYTHM TRAMPS	ROSE-COLORED GLASSES VOL. 2	BLUE HEART
32	ARLEN ROTH AND JERRY JEMMOTT	SUPER SOUL SESSION!	BLUE HEART
33	CHRISTONE "KINGFISH" INGRAM	LIVE IN LONDON	ALLIGATOR
34	ALTERED FIVE BLUES BAND	TESTIFYIN'	BLIND PIG
35	JOYANN PARKER	ROOTS	HOPELESS ROMANTIC
36	MIKE ZITO	LIFE IS HARD	GULF COAST
37	CHRIS BEARD	PASS IT ON DOWN	BLUE HEART
38	GUITAR JACK WARGO	THE NEW NORMAL	SELF-RELEASE
39	EDDIE 9V	CAPRICORN	RUF
40	RICK VITO	CADILLAC MAN	BLUE HEART
41	EMMA WILSON	MEMPHIS CALLING	SELF-RELEASE
42	DIEGO MONGUE BAND	WHILE YOU WERE GONE	SELF-RELEASE
43	LARRY TAYLOR AND THE TAYLOR FAMILY	GENERATIONS OF BLUES: WEST SIDE LEGACY	NOLA BLUE
44	11 GUYS QUARTET	11 X 11	VIZZTONE
45	MISTY BLUES	OUTSIDE THE LINES	GUITAR ONE
46	CHRIS YAKOPCIC	LIVE AT THE HIDDEN GEM	YAKO
47	BOB MARGOLIN	THANKS	VIZZTONE
48	ALBERT CUMMINGS	STRONG	IVY MUSIC COMPANY
49	SUNNYSIDERS	27 STITCHES	DANCING BEAR
50	LIL' JIMMY REED WITH BEN LEVIN	BACK TO BATON ROUGE	NOLA BLUE

www.rootsmusicreport.com

BIG BLUES REVIEWS

TROY REDFERN

INVOCATION

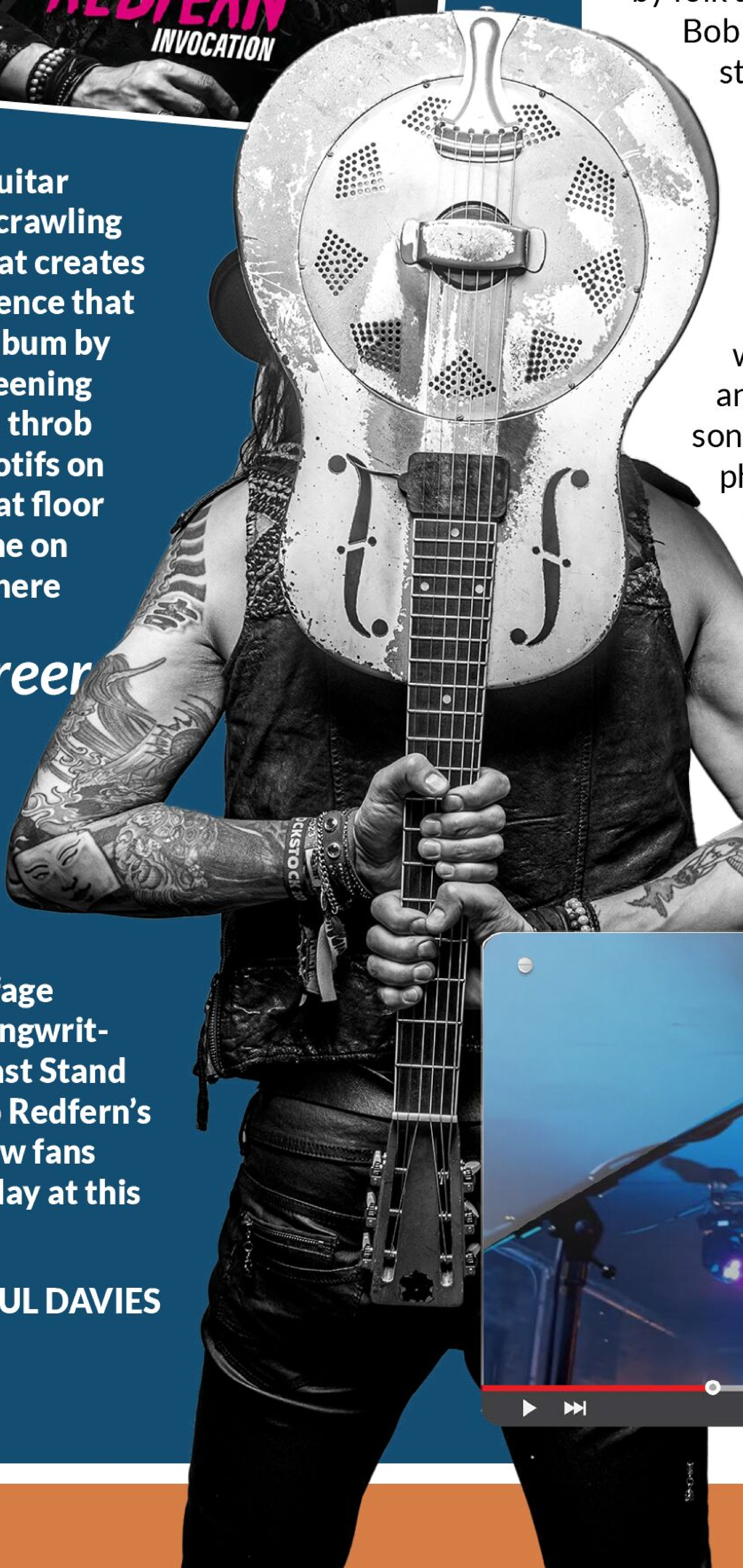
Red7 Records

Unusually tuned to the Orkney key, where the bottom E string is taken down a couple of steps to C, Invocation represents a deep down and dirty electric sound in which the guitar sonics are as low slung as a lizard's full belly crawling along hot desert sand. It's a unique tuning that creates the good, bad and beautiful Wild West ambience that twangs and reverberates on this third solo album by this leathery attired blues musician. The careening slide show on The Strange, the riff 'n' rhythm throb on Getaway and stentorian choppy guitar motifs on Van Helsing are a trinity of opening songs that floor the pedals and sets the spooky low-slung tone on this undoubtably career advancing album. There

> *undoubtably a career advancing album*

are plenty more sonic spoils in store as Native puts the 'dig' into indigenous with its artful pounding percussion and reverb heavy atmospherics. Further on, Voodoo Princess casts a spellbinding aura of rock riffage which adds to this record's high quality of songwriting and sonic execution. The brooding The Last Stand closes out a belting album that will appeal to Redfern's already growing audience and will invoke new fans who appreciate artists who write, sing and play at this high artistic plain of expression.

PAUL DAVIES



BARBECUE BOB

BARBECUE BLUES THE COLLECTION 1927-30

ACROBAT MUSIC

We are fortunate that modern technology, coupled with deep and obsessive interest in the roots of blues music, gives us access to collections of vintage and influential blues recordings like this one. The interesting fact about Barbecue Bob (his name derives from his occupation as a barbecue chef who also entertained customers singing and playing guitar) is playing style, indicative of a genre known as 'Piedmont Blues'. The style originated in an area including the Appalachian Mountains, the Carolinas, and Georgia, although most of its famous exponents – Blind Blake, John White, Rev. Gary Davis, Blind Willie McTell, and others, tended to find fame when they had moved to other areas, leading to their 'Piedmont' style being accredited elsewhere. The Piedmont Blues style was heavily influenced by folk and gospel music, and Barbecue Bob brought an innovative playing style to his sides, using bottleneck on a twelve-string acoustic, with a 'flailing' style more associated with clawhammer banjo technique. This collection highlights the simplicity of recording in those early days. A producer would travel with a tape recorder and single microphone and capture songs in one take, high on atmosphere and authenticity, low on fidelity and sound quality. The fact that the forty-seven tracks here represent output over a mere three years shows the frequency and popularity of Bob's recordings. Songs like Cloudy Sky Blues and Mama, You Don't Suit Me, and Poor Boy A Long

Ways From Home are absolutely full of genuine atmosphere and emotion in the sadness of their stories, and the dextrous guitar picking that accompanies them. Like so many of his contemporaries, Barbecue Bob didn't even make it to thirty before he succumbed to either influenza infection or tuberculosis. We are fortunate indeed that historical vignettes of genuine blues history that could so easily have been lost, are preserved, and available for any fan of blues history, or just fans of authentic roots blues music. The number of cuts ascribed to Barbecue Bob show his prolific output as a blues writer, and his mournful voice and chiming guitar invoke a time long gone, but for people like us, never forgotten.

ANDY HUGHES

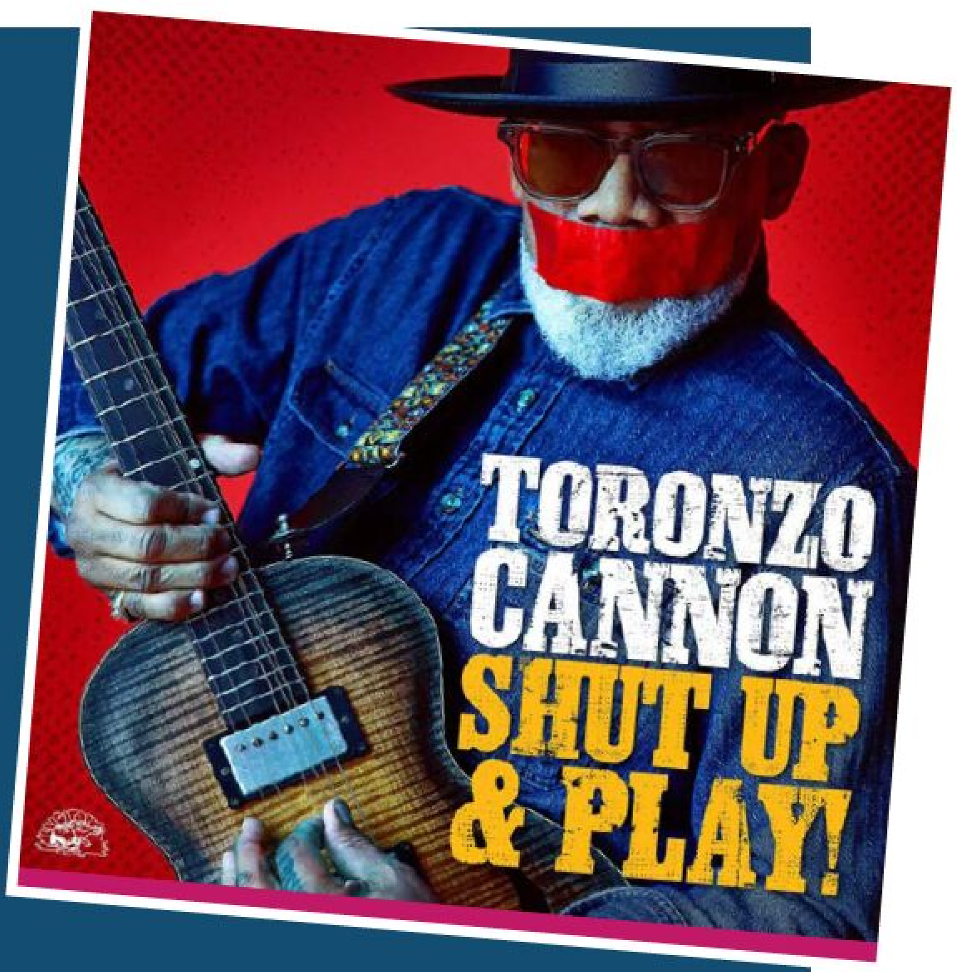
BIG HEAD TODD & THE MONSTERS
THUNDERBIRD

Big Records

Big Head Todd and The Monsters have returned with their latest album, delivering a powerful and soulful collection of tracks that exemplify their signature blend of rock, blues, and Americana and anthemic feelgood tunes. From start to finish, this album is a captivating journey through dynamic melodies, heartfelt lyrics, and impeccable musicianship. This Colorado quartet comprise; Todd Park Mohr, vocals, guitar, keys, sax, harmonica, Brian Nevin drums, Rob Squires on bass guitar, and Jeremy Lawton guitar, keys, vocals, steel guitar. They are a quality no nonsense unit and really produce their own style to these ten tracks. Opener. Her Way Out is anthemic and up-tempo tune about relationships and the human condition with guitar and keyboard rocking out here. A musical odyssey continues with the hard rocking tones of Thunderbird the title tracks, no holds barred here. Crush, mellows the tone somewhat a retrospective tune about broken relations and moving on, loving the vibe on this, especially the midway guitar solo, summer vibes. Don't Kill Me Tonight takes on an upbeat catchy tune, a countrified punk tune, excellent rhythm. Turn the volume and rock out to the pulsating opening to, Glorious Full Moon, mellow harmonies meet piano infused chords, very soulful. Similar up-tempo vibe to, My New Number One, play this

TORONZO CANNON
SHUT UP AND PLAY

Alligator Records



Shut Up And Play, is a powerhouse album boasting a dozen original tracks penned by the incomparable Toronzo Cannon. In their latest musical endeavour, the collaborative genius of Cannon and Bruce Iglauer, the president of Alligator Records, takes centre stage. With his signature searing guitar work at the forefront, the album traverses a diverse musical landscape, from infectious, danceable tunes like, Something To Do Man to Cannon's trademark tongue-in-cheek anthems such as I Hate Love. However, it's not all light-hearted fare on this record. Cannon delves into weightier themes with tracks like Had To Go Through It To Get To It and the eponymous title track. The latter, Shut Up And Play, serves as a poignant response to the backlash he faced for speaking out against racism online. In a society that often attempts to silence marginalised voices, he defiantly asserts his right to use his platform for social commentary, particularly in support of movements like Black Lives Matter. Through his music, he refuses to be confined to the role of mere entertainer, highlighting a depth and authenticity that sets him apart in the industry. These are not just random blues infused tunes; this is a declaration of artistic integrity and a testament to his unwavering commitment to both his craft and his convictions. So, buckle up and let Toronzo Cannon take you on a journey through the heart and soul of the blues. Highly recommended, brilliant solid band, emotional and poignant lyrics, Chicago style blues at its finest.

> *emotional and poignant lyrics, Chicago style blues at its finest*

COLIN CAMPBELL

CAN'T FIX THE WORLD

WALK IT OFF

BUY MERCH

LISTEN

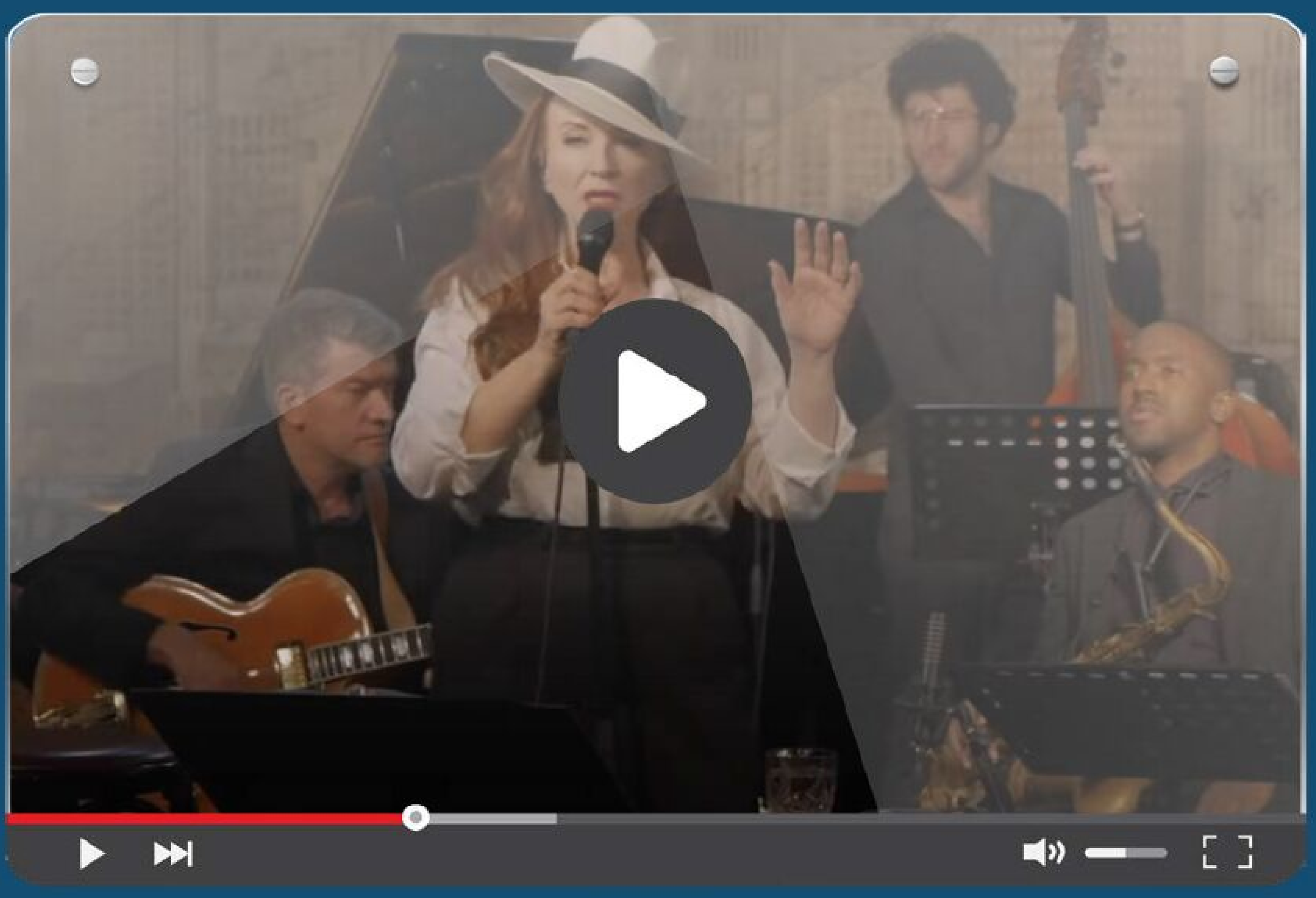
JUDITH OWEN
COMES ALIVE

Twanky Records

As I sat listening to this album, it immediately put me in mind of a small, smokey club in Mississippi. The imagination of a dimly lit club with a small stage and tables in an arc shape, the artist illuminated by a single stage light. Now, most of this could be true, apart from the small club being situated in Mississippi. The club here is the Jazzroom, Bern, Switzerland. Now you don't normally expect a live Blues/Jazz album to be recorded in Switzerland, but in fact, the Scandinavian Blues scene has been thriving for many years. So, to the album itself, from the first notes and the first vocals from Judith, I was captivated. She has such a great Blues/Jazz vocal, smokey and gritty, but also with a sweetness, a perfect combination. Lady

> *in contention for album of the year*

Be Good is the first track, and as I have just testified to, a vocal that oozes charm and sophistication with a throaty raw just for good measure. The band she has with her is as important as she is. Yes, she's the singer, the main part, but the group of musicians she has around her certainly plays a huge part. The horns, the piano, the guitar that jumps out and bites you on the ass, and also can be as smooth as silk. There are sixteen tracks on the album and everyone is a gem, Satchek Mouth Baby, Hard Hearted Woman, I can't pick out a favourite track, they are all so good, and delivered with consummate ease, a feat not as easy as some may think. Then we come to Fever, yes the Peggy Lee song. It starts so differently than the original, and the cover by Elvis Presley, you almost don't expect it to be the same song, but it is the same song, but what a version. It is sublime, as is the following track, I Put A Spell On You, originally recorded by Screamin' Jay Hawkins, and made famous by Nina Simone. Once again, a brilliant rendition of a Blues/Jazz classic. If this is not in contention for album of the year, then there is something wrong with the world of music.



STEPHEN HARRISON

LADY BE GOOD

TROUBLE IN MIIND

BUY VINYL

BUY CD

loud and enjoy the ride. Twice As Bright slows the tone, a masterful tune, Todd's vocals so good throughout. King Kong has a funky tone feel again adding to the diverse textures of musicality. Final tune is Rainbow Girl the lyrics are the thing here, a wonderful first-class release.

COLIN CAMPBELL

BLIND LEMON PLEDGE
OH SO GOOD

Ofeh Records

With a vocal delivery like Bob Dylan's, and bluesy atmospheric, minimalist electric and acoustic guitar the singer-songwriter James Byfield sets out his stall on Oh So Good. The stage name of Blind Lemon Pledge shows his blues credentials, with sterling, although often muffled and very quiet support from drummer Juli Moscovitz and Peter Grenell on Bass gives his slide guitar driven reveries some back-bone. With many originals, and one cover, of House of the Rising Sun, there is definitely a bluesy hue to the album. Byfield's idiosyncratic vocals and precise and unhurried guitar work

unfurls itself on slow blues reveries, and more upbeat Cajun inspired numbers. The only thing that lets down the album is the sound mix. The vocals are mixed too high and everything else is mixed too low, which gives something of a disconcerting effect, particularly shown during album opener Big Bill. Once the ear is used to this sound though, it doesn't seem so bad, although it could be off-putting to the more casual listener. The lo-fi experience is part of the album's charms, and the music sometimes suits this treatment. The slow blues of Moon Over Memphis mixes well with the jump jive of Go Jump The Willie and the Cajun backbeat of Ma Belle Cherie, and the album closer of House of the Rising Sun mixes growled vocals with brooding slide guitar to good effect.

BEN MACNAIR

RICK ESTRIN AND THE NIGHTCATS

THE HITS KEEP COMING

Alligator Records

Rick Estrin's latest release is a masterclass in modern blues. With his signature blend of wit, charm, and undeniable musical talent, Rick Estrin delivers an album that pays homage to the rich tradition of the blues while injecting it with his own unique style and perspective. From the first track, Somewhere Else to the infectious groove on the twelfth, Whatever Happened To Dobie Strange; all the songs grab the listener's attention and doesn't let go. Each song is a testament to Rick Estrin's prowess as a co- songwriter and performer, with catchy melodies, infectious rhythms, and lyrics that range from introspective to downright hilarious. Estrin's harmonica playing is, as always, impeccable. His soulful, emotive tones add depth and texture to every track, serving as the perfect complement to his gritty, expressive vocals. Backed by the impeccable musicianship of The Nightcats, produced at band's bass player Kid Andersen's Greaseland studios with a host of guest artists the album's sound is tight, polished, and effortlessly cool. From the clever wordplay to infectious energy and ability to tug at the heartstrings as on I Finally Hit The Bottom, this is pure fun. Also, the reinterpretation of Leonard Cohen's Everybody Knows is an instant touch of genius. Overall, this release is a must have for any blues aficionado. With its stellar musicianship, classic story telling, and intoxicating energy, it's an album that is sure to keep listeners coming back for more.

> *classic story telling, and intoxicating energy*

COLIN CAMPBELL

EVERYBODY KNOWS

THE CIRCUS IS...

BUY MERCH

BUY CD

DEB RYDER

LIVE AND HAVIN' FUN

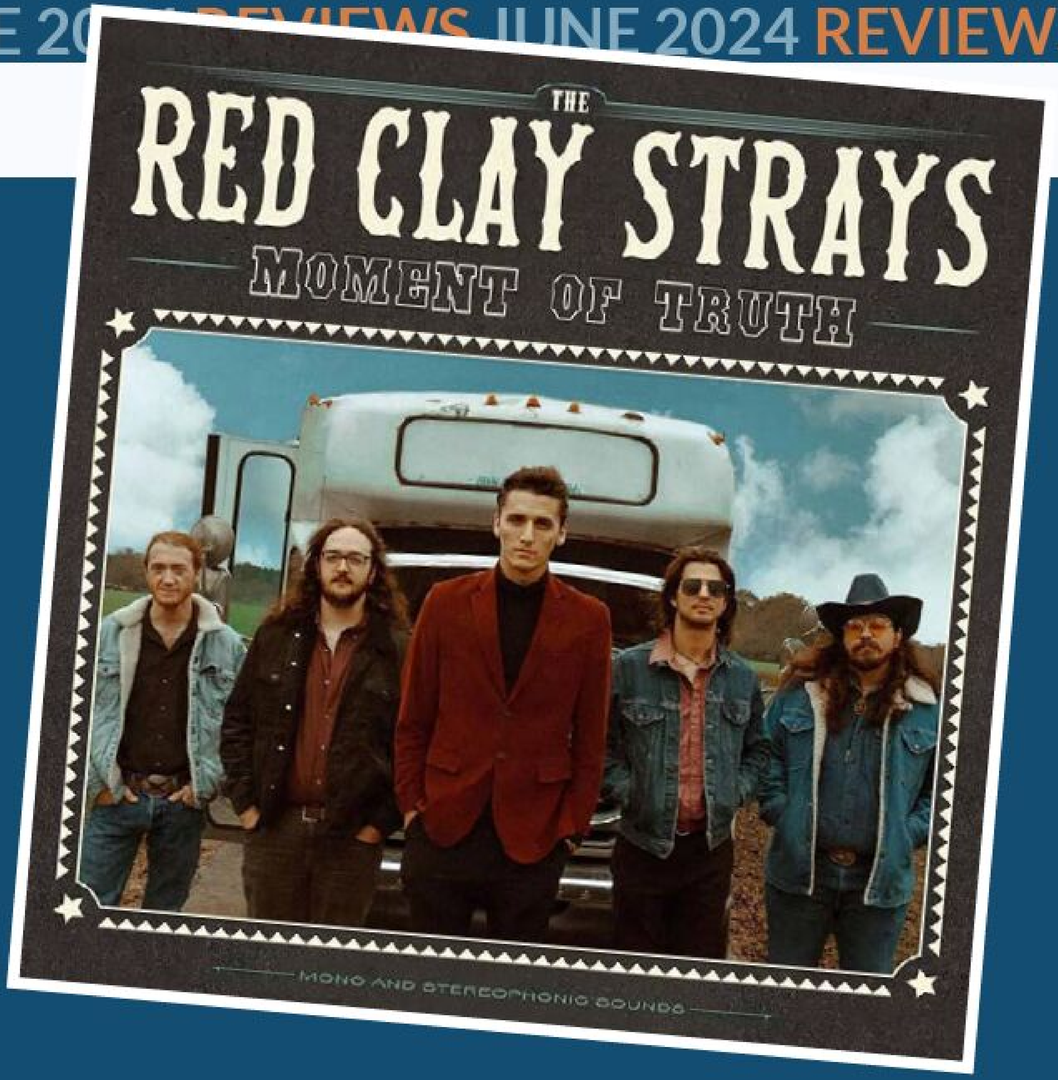
Vizztone

I've had the privilege of listening to Deb's albums before, and I have interviewed her for Blues Matters Magazine in the past. So, her work is not new to me, so when this album dropped

THE RED CLAY STRAYS

MOMENT OF TRUTH

Hbyco Records



Stepping into the realm of Red Clay Strays is akin to stumbling upon a hidden gem. Their music, a concoction of honky-tonk and progressive rock, transports the listener to a different era altogether. There are so many styles to the musicality anchored in a rock-solid bass foundation, and embellished with psychedelic guitar riffs, blurring the lines between tradition and innovation. In their words "non-denominational rock and roll." Clocking in at nearly fifty minutes, the twelve tracks are a journey through dancefloor anthems, headbanging hits, and heartfelt ballads. In a bold move, the band incorporates samples into tracks like Killers, shedding light on poignant subjects like homeless veterans, while leveraging the studio's power to amplify their already potent narratives. Whether the song has a bass-powered groove like Stones Throw, a powerful emphatic drum beat like on Do Me Wrong, or a layer of intriguing guitar chords on Heavy Heart, lead singer Brandon Coleman' s vocals soar with passion and emotion. The tempo changes with Ghosts, as the band get into no holds barred rock and roll. Similarly, they go full on with, She's No Good which is a good rocker and captures their vintage sound to perfection. Highlight must be the haunting ballad Wondering Why, each lyric delivered with a vocal that melts the soul. With this release, Red Clay Strays assert themselves not just as purveyors of nostalgia, but as torchbearers of a new musical frontier, a wonderful debut release.

> *torchbearers of a new musical frontier, a wonderful debut release*

COLIN CAMPBELL

LADY BE GOOD

TROUBLE IN MIIND

BUY VINYL

BUY CD

at my desk, I knew that I was going to be in for a great time. All the songs on Live And Havin' Fun are written by Deb, and her bassist husband, Ric. There is a magnificent array of musicians on this album, with guest spots by Albert Lee, and Tony Braunagel amongst others. The album was recorded live at The Mint, Los Angeles, and makes this her sixth album release overall. Fun Never Hurt No One, opens the show, and It's quite an apt title for this album because that's exactly what this album is all about, fun, dancing, and playing The Blues. Deb's voice, and indeed, her all-around persona, exude feelings of well-being, making you want to get up and shake what your mamma gave you, that's what this album does from the get-go. Of course, having musicians of this caliber helps, but it's the sheer raunchiness and devil-may-care attitude that Deb Ryder has in spades that makes this album as good as it is. Might Just Get Lucky, is a slow-burning Blues ballad with magnificent piano accompanying Deb's vocals, a truly wonderful tune. Blues and Soul combine so well here, creating a metamorphosis that slides so easily into Funk, and back into Boogie Woogie, creating a musical eruption. Live And Havin' Fun, would, in my opinion, make a wonderful soundtrack to a movie, it just has that vibe about it. The final track on the album, Any Bottle On The Shelf, kind of bucks the trend of some Blues songs telling stories about drinking. They usually tell you how drink has ruined their lives, but this song is entirely the opposite. " I do my drinking by myself, Any Bottle On The Shelf" celebrates knocking back whatever takes your fancy, enjoying it, and telling everyone about it. This album is a lot of fun, don't believe me? Listen to it, Deb Ryder is here to stay.

STEPHEN HARRISON

GEMINII DRAGON

3

Lightning In A Bottle Records

Hailing from the mystic bayous of Louisiana emerges a force to be reckoned with in the realm of blues music. Jessica Harper a.k.a. Geminii Dragon a vocal powerhouse, has delved deep into the soulful sounds of the late 60s and 70s, drawing inspiration from legends like Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Janis Joplin, infusing her own brand of blues with a

raw, electrifying energy that sets her apart. Raised on a diverse musical diet curated by her parents, Geminii Dragon's passion for music spans generations and genres, evident in the soulful resonance of her voice and the depth of her lyrics. Collaborating with producer and guitarist Christian Simeon, she embarks on a journey of musical exploration, pushing the boundaries of her artistry with each project. Now, with her third album simply titled '3', Geminii Dragon continues to elevate her craft, fusing elements of Memphis soul, Texas blues, and classic rock into a mesmerizing tapestry of sound. From the pulsating groove of, I Wanna Know to the gritty blues-rock anthems like "Desert Heart and You Ain't Up To No Good, each track on '3' showcases her unparalleled vocal prowess and songwriting finesse. Standout moments like Cherokee pay homage to her Native American roots. While tracks like A Fool For You and Caught Up In Your

THE COMMONERS

RESTLESS

Gypsy Soul Records

For fans who have journeyed alongside the Canadian Roots-Rock quintet since their critically acclaimed release, Find A Better Way, this latest offering is a continuation of a dedicated musical odyssey. With each chord infused with Southern-style swagger, every note punctuated by the haunting wail of slide guitar or the swell of organ keys, and every lyric delivered with heartfelt conviction, the album exudes an aura of authenticity. This musical journey represents a natural evolution for this band's sound. These ten well-crafted songs mix different musical styles but with their own twist. Recorded at RHC Music in Toronto, this release offers a dynamic spectrum of soundscapes, seamlessly weaving introspective, slower-tempo ballads with rip-roaring anthems. This is undoubtedly the band's best work to date, taking the listener on a blues rock infused journey. From the opening bars of Devil Teasin' Me, the pace is set with dynamic guitar riffs infused with pulsating rhythm section. Shake You Off continues the rocky vibe, Chris Medhurst on vocals screaming the lyrics and backing rhythm is phenomenal, vocal harmonies ring through clear a barnstormer.

> *This is undoubtedly the band's best work to date*

The Way I Am, has a 70s Bad Company feel to it, anthemic blues rock personified. The tone recedes on the mellow tones of the title track, Restless one for a summer's day car drive, melodic and harmonious. Who Are You is another highlight, intoxicating sound from the start, a crowd pleaser, dancefloor filler. Too Soon To Know You is a self-reflective tune about life's changing evolution, a slow mellow vibe. Last track is an unplugged beautiful raw acoustic song, All That We Have, just sublime.

COLIN CAMPBELL

SEE YOU AGAIN

TOO MUCH

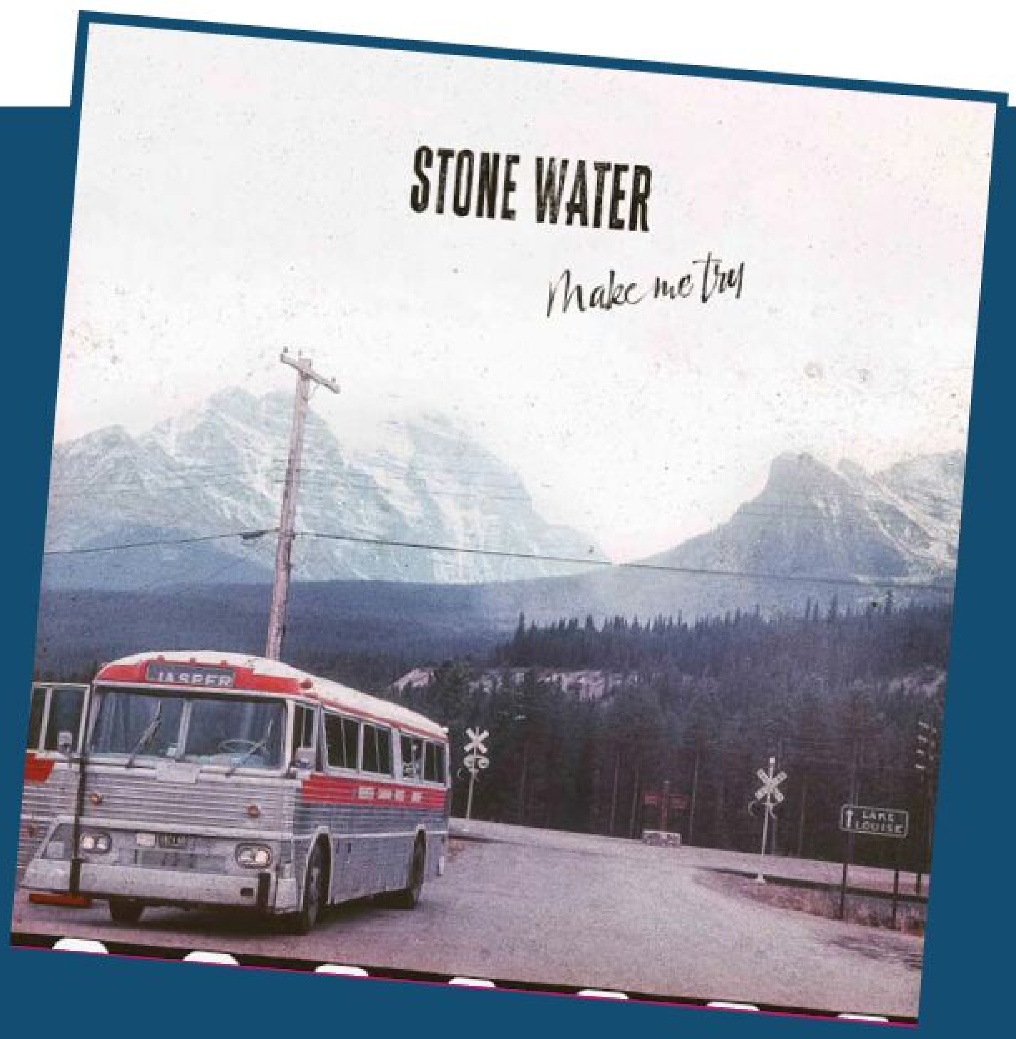
BUY MERCH

LISTEN

STONE WATER

MAKE ME TRY

Timezone Records



This album by the German based band from Hamburg takes me back to the late sixties when Classic Rock was at its prime. It has a vintage vibe but in doing so it is also has a contemporary feel to it, as the band draw from American Roots music, made famous by bands like Tom Petty, Lynyrd Skynyrd and more recently the Black Crowes. These guys are a true Rocking four-piece Blues band led by guitarist Robert Wendt who has written most of the material on this, their debut album. The vocals/Harmonica are handled by American Bob Beeman with Artjom Feldtser and Hanser Schuler taking control of the rhythm section. The opening track, Stony Rock is a defining song as it sets the tone for the rest of the album. It has a rock swagger feel to it, paying a debt to the sounds created by late sixties bands, The Rolling Stones, and The Faces. The next couple of tracks all follow in a similar vein until the title track Make Me Try which is an extended "slow burner" Country Rock song allowing the band to incorporate a frenzied middle instrumental section before closing with flailing Harp blasts. All but one of the eleven tracks are self-written which highlights the bands strengths. They have a thoughtful approach to their lyrical content which was developed during the Covid "break." While they do not perform any out and out Blues music, they keep the blues feeling close, an example is the song Awful Blues where Robert Wendt plays some very tasty lead guitar. The final track on the album If You Get Lost, is a superb meandering Southern Rock ballad with strong vocals and slide guitar, which is a fitting conclusion to a very fine debut album.

> *a very fine debut album*

ADRIAN BLACKLEE

MAKE ME TRY

CHANGE

BUY MERCH

LISTEN

Love channel the raw intensity of classic blues-rock with a modern twist. With '3', Geminii Dragon cements her status as a rising star in the blues-rock genre and beyond, blending tradition with innovation to create an unforgettable musical experience that resonates deep within the soul.

COLIN CAMPBELL

JEFF ROGERS

DREAM JOB

Independent

Jeff Rogers' latest release serves up a feast of soulful storytelling, drawing rightful comparisons to luminaries like Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles, and Otis Redding. Hailing from Bathurst, New Brunswick, and nurtured in Ottawa, Rogers' musical journey began early, under the guidance of supportive parents who fostered his multifaceted talents. From piano to saxophone, guitar, and a voice that resonates with soulful depth, Rogers emerges as a versatile maestro in his own right, throughout these nine soulful blues tracks. A fixture in Canada's music scene, he has done a lot of session work and a decade-long tenure with The Cooper Brothers, ensures his status as a seasoned artist. With credentials firmly in place, Rogers delivers a tour de force with this release blending country and rock influences into a seamless sonic tapestry that defies genre boundaries. The opener, Her Kind Of Trouble with visceral lyrics sung with a passion and excellent harmonies with backing vocals is astounding setting the scene. The ballad, Dream Job, has sublime soulful tones throughout. It's all in the storytelling. Listen to, So Worth The Wait a duet with Kelly Lee Evans, a classic tune. Co-produced alongside bandmate Dick Cooper, this release has a lush, full-bodied sound that finds its roots in the iconic Muscle Shoals Sound Studio. Rogers' reverence for the studio's legendary aura permeates, as he collaborates with seasoned musicians, including Kelvin Holly, Clayton Ivey, Justin Holder, and Shonna Tucker. The result is a collection of narratives, impeccably crafted and delivered with a groove-infused charm that epitomises satisfaction. A highly recommended release.

COLIN CAMPBELL

JENNIFER LYN & THE GROOVE REVIVAL

LIVE FROM THE NORTHERN PLAINS

J&R Collective

Now here's a band out of North Dakota, not a place I tend to associate with the blues, but singer, guitarist and bandleader Jennifer Lyn and her tight and versatile band can help to change that. Jennifer herself is from Minneapolis, Minnesota, and grew up listening to the blues, rock, Rhythm & Blues and roots music of her parents' record collection. It has certainly shaped her approach as this album shows quite clearly. Jennifer writes her own material, strong items like 'Gypsy Soul' and 'I Hope We Make A Change' prove that she does it extremely well, as too does the fine slow-ish blues of 'Going Round In Circles' - but here she also pays tribute to those early listening experiences. She turns in an excellent version of 'Love Me Like A Man', Chris Smither's song, though best known from Bonnie Raitt, of course. She evokes the early 70s with a fine, emotive version of Creedence Clearwater Revival's 'Long As

BLACK COUNTRY COMMUNION

V

J&R Adventures

V is an outstanding 51 minutes of refreshing Hard Blues Rock music by the returning Black Country Communion. It's the album many hoped they would make, and these paragons of rock have over delivered on these wishes. V is an album in which every element flies and falls beautifully into place. The compositional excellence is backed up by the virtuoso musicianship that serves each track and Glenn Hughes interprets them all in his still remarkably fine-tuned voice.

The breadth of rock stylings from the early warning of momentous opener Enlighten, and funky keyboard rock stomper Stay Free, detail a sharp alert for the sonic treasures to come. The astutely conceived sublime rock epic Red Sun could be this album's standout track, then again… nevertheless, it sets up the barnstorming blues rock of Restless in which Joe Bonamassa plays some of his finest blues guitar licks, whilst Hughes emotively displays his range of moans.

There are also gritty riffs aplenty as evidenced on the tight but loose Letting Go with its contrasting melodic verse. Skyway equally brings together similar sonic molecules where Jason Bonham and Hughes lock in step and Bonamassa and Derek Sherinian double riff. Satisfyingly, there are also deep and dirty rock motifs where Love And Trust hits a sweet spot like a classic rock juggernaut in which all players have individual cameos within its glorious whole. Wearing their influences on their re-fashioned sleeves, the deceptive gospel-tinged Hammond Organ intro to You're Not Alone is overwhelmed by a heavyweight guitar/keyboard riff. Again, it heralds in Hughes' voice of rock credentials. Put together, and like the entire album, it covers familiar songwriting territory, but the music possesses an extraordinary different and stimulating aspect to it.

Not confined to one rock styling, the AOR melodic soundscape on the intro to Too Far Gone, mashed up with another gritty verse driven riff and middle eight breakdown with solos, is a reminder of the fertile compositional approach these four musical missionaries convert into ready-made classics. Furthermore, the infectious funky blues motif on final track The Open Road, (in which Bonamassa channels a devout homage to Kossoff) with its Free inspired Mr Big breakdown, is pure class. To summarise, aided by Kevin Shirley's lean production, this virtuoso foursome has delivered a near perfect album.

PAUL DAVIES

ENLIGHTEN

RED SUN

BUY MERCH

LISTEN

KATIE KNIPP

ME

Independent

With her powerhouse vocals and masterful command of the piano, and other instruments, she delivers a collection of ten tracks that are both emotionally resonant and musically rich. One of the standout qualities is her raw and honest songwriting. Each track feels like a personal confession, with her baring her soul and sharing her experiences with refreshing authenticity. From the introspective balladry of the opener, Mud, to the fiery passion and steel guitar tones of Dirty Cables, she fearlessly explores themes of love, heartbreak, self-discovery with a pure honesty and passion in her delivery. The album's production is equally impressive, with lush arrangements that perfectly complement Knipp's soulful voice. Whether it's the haunting guitar riffs on Outlaw Doc or the soul-stirring piano notation on, Vampire, each instrument is expertly layered to create a rich sonic tapestry that draws the listener in from start to finish. Katie highlights her versatility as an artist, seamlessly blending elements of blues, rock, and soul to create a sound that is uniquely her own. Her powerful vocals soar effortlessly over each track, infusing every lyric with emotion and depth and a vocal range that excels through songs like Time And Space, it's all about the storytelling. A particular favourite is Lava Pot, seductive vocals infuse this toxic song, the arrangement of the vocals is stunning. Final tune, Stillness even has gunshots at the start, but the beautiful piano laden tune is mystical and haunting. A masterpiece of musical tones throughout and her voice rises like a primeval beast. With its heartfelt songwriting, impeccable musicianship, and soul-stirring performances, this is an album that demands to be heard.

> *impeccable musicianship, and soul-stirring performances*

COLIN CAMPBELL

MUD

SAD EYED LOVER

BUY MERCH

LISTEN

I Can See The Light' (a particularly fine vocal on this one), and conjures up some southern rock with a couple of rather noteworthy Allman Brothers' covers. There is even a homage to the "British invasion" with a lovely rendition of 'House Of The Rising Sun'. The accompanying musicians, Richard Torrance on guitar, Barb Jiskra on keys, bassist Nolyn Falcon and drummer Jim Anderson - are spot-on throughout. I'm looking forward to hearing more from Jennifer and the Groove Revival up in the northern plains.

NORMAN DARWEN

JO CARLEY & THE OLD DRY SKULLS

LIVE FROM TEMPERANCE

Voodoo Shack Records

Let me first introduce the band, Jo Carley (Vocals, Washboard, Mandolin, and Percussion). Tim Carley, (Battered Archtop Guitar, Kick, Rattlin' Shoe, and Backing Vocals). James Le Huray (Beat-Up Double Bass, Backing Vocals). This is where the normality stops, if you are a newcomer to this band, you will be wondering what the hell I'm on about. If you have heard this band before, or seen them performing live, you'll know

exactly what I'm talking about. Ok, this band is a combination of the Blues meets Vaudeville. Theatrical musicians with a taste for the dark side, but, oh my, are they good. I've been lucky enough to see this band perform a couple of times on The Blues Matters Stage at Butlins, and immediately, I was drawn to them. From the first song, Be Careful What You Wish For, Jo Carley casts her magic spell on the audience at Temperance with husband Tim and bassist Big Jim Hairy Bones turning the music from Goth to Vaudeville, and back to Memphis, in their inimitable style. From a personal point of view, I can't take my eyes off these guys. A live performance is mesmerizing, all the songs are written by the band, the musicianship is wonderful, and Jo Carley herself captivates the audience with her silky, but dark melodic vocals. The songs have titles such as The Zombie, The Devil, and Not A Bone. In fact, bones make up a large part of this band's repertoire, whether it's part of a song, a piece of art on an instrument, or handmade pieces of craftwork on the merch stall. During the intro for what is my favourite track of theirs, I'll Put My Voodoo On You, Jo mentions Blues Matters Magazine. She tells the story of her sending a CD to the then-owner and much-missed Alan Pearce. He also saw the potential and was drawn to this one-of-a-kind band. He even invited them to play The Blues Matters Stage at Butlins, as we also did at Blackpool Winter Gardens earlier this year. A tremendous trio of musicians, go to see them and expect the outside-of-the-box experience. Go and enjoy, there is nothing else like this band on the planet. Keep doing what you are doing guys.

STEPHEN HARRISON

JOE BONAMASSA
LIVE AT THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL

J&R Adventures

You could be forgiven for thinking, another live album from Joe Bonamassa? Joe has released almost twenty live albums over his career, many of them performed at iconic venues around the world, The Royal Albert Hall, Sydney Opera House, and Carnegie Hall, to name but a few. Live At The Hollywood Bowl, yes, another iconic musical venue, also adds something brand new to the Bonamassa live collection. This gig was

MARCUS KING
MOOD SWINGS

Spinfarm Records

Marcus King's latest album marks a departure from his signature Southern jam-band sound, surprising fans with a soulful shift. Known for his gritty vocals and dynamic guitar work, King collaborated with producer Rick Rubin to explore a more introspective side, relying less on guitar and more on his vocal range and lyrics. There are differing musical layers throughout the eleven tracks he uses piano, strings, and R&B influences a departure from more rocky tones this time. In tracks like Mood Swings, King's voice takes on a conversational rasp, accompanied by understated guitar and poignant lyrics about vulnerability and emotional struggles. This departure from his usual hard-hitting rock style isn't entirely new; he has previously experimented with soulful elements in earlier albums. Rubin's production provides a sensitive backdrop, drawing from vintage sounds without feeling derivative. King's lyrics delve into personal experiences, reflecting on addiction, mental health, and relationships. Songs like Bipolar Love and Save Me reveal intimate reflections

> *lyrics delve into personal experiences, reflecting on addiction*

on finding solace and hope relating to his angst in his life circumstances. Throughout this wonderful release, he explores themes of acceptance and seeking refuge, both in relationships and within himself. His lyrical honesty breathes fresh life into familiar genres, infusing them with raw emotion and personal urgency. Ultimately, King's album serves as a beacon of comfort and understanding for listeners grappling with similar challenges, offering a sense of solace and connection in shared struggles. Through his music, King searches for a symbolic safe space where he, and his audience, can find restoration and comfort amidst life's uncertainties.

COLIN CAMPBELL

MOOD SWINGS

SAVE ME

BUY MERCH

LISTEN

performed with a full orchestra, giving a totally different feel to what is, an already wonderful set-list of material, some old, some played for the first time. When One Door Opens, forgive the pun, opens proceedings, it's the orchestra that greets the sold-out audience, a spine-tingling curtain-raiser for what was to be a very unforgettable evening. Joe plays songs from many different albums and from his last studio album, Blues Deluxe Vol 2. Ball Pen Hammer, from the Sloe Gin album, has always filled me with joy every time I've listened to it. And this rendition, backed by an orchestra, as well as Joe's amazing touring band, certainly gets the goosebumps rising. The songs just keep coming, one amazing tune, after another, Prisoner, If Heartaches Were Nickels, I know I've said this a few times before, but I don't think I've heard Joe or his band reach this level of greatness before. In my opinion, having such an amazing orchestra behind him, raised everyone's game to a plateau that they possibly thought did not exist. Well, we now know that it does exist. Very few people could carry this off, this album will, in my estimation, go down as one of the best modern-day live albums of all time. The last three songs, The Ballad Of John Henry, Twenty-Four Hour Blues, and Sloe Gin, brought this amazing evening to a thundering climax. Do I have a standout tack on the album? If pushed, I'd have to say, Twenty-Four Hour Blues. I'm sure that Bobby Bland would be a very happy guy, listening to this rendition. So, where will the next iconic venue be given the Joe Bonamassa treatment?

STEPHEN HARRISON

ALASTAIR GREENE

STANDING OUT LOUD

Ruf Records

Alastair Greene has firmly cemented himself at the heart of the ever-growing Blues/Rock scene. This has in no small way catapulted him to a new and far wider audience. I've been a fan of Greene for a few years now and had the pleasure of interviewing him for Blues Matters. Standing Out Loud is a damn fine album, showcasing the vocal and instrumental side of Greene, as well as the songwriting side. You Can't Hold Me kicks off the album with aplomb. The gravelly vocals combined with the power chords on the guitar let you know straight away what this album is all

> *Greene surpasses himself on vocals and playing*

about. The album continues in much the same vane with In Trouble, Am I To Blame, and the title track, before it takes a well-earned breather for the last three songs. The album was recorded in two sessions, the first in Nashville, and the second in Austin. Both sessions were recorded as a trio, you could be forgiven for calling them a power trio such is the intensity of the recordings. The final three songs, Temptation, Rusty Dagger, and Bullfrog Bluews bring out the Blues side of Greene so well. Rusty Dagger, in particular, is without doubt the most Blues orientated song on the album, Greene surpasses himself on vocals and playing, enabling him to

remind us all that when done and said all, he's a Blues artist at heart. The final tune on the album was not written by Alastair Greene, but it is, and was a Blues classic, Bullfrog Blues. I've always loved Rory Gallagher and his rendition of this is so good, I'm sure that he will be looking down and smiling in admiration for the way Greene goes about this. A fitting end to what is a brilliant album.

STEPHEN HARRISON

SLOW BURN

IN TROUBLE

BUY MERCH

LISTEN

KATIE HENRY

GET GOIN'

Ruf Records

With her latest release, rising blues rock sensation Katie Henry continues to carve her niche with a captivating blend of soulful melodies and raw authenticity. Produced by the esteemed Bernard Allison, this album serves as a testament to Henry's evolution as both a songwriter and performer. Hailing from New Jersey, Henry first made waves with her acclaimed album "On My Way," earning her a lot of recognition. With Get Goin', she embarks on a new sonic journey, intertwining elements of blues, rock, and soul with finesse and innovation.

From the energetic opener Love Like Kerosene with understated piano playing under a great guitar riff, to the haunting rendition of Nobody's Fault But Mine, Katie demonstrates her versatility and command over a range of musical styles. Each of these eleven tracks is a testament to her emotive vocal delivery and impeccable instrumentation, backed by a tight band that breathes life into every note. Standout moments include the poignant ballad, A Doll's Heart, where her evocative storytelling takes centre stage. The funky twist of Voodoo Woman showcases her ability to reinvent classic blues standards with flair and finesse. Throughout the release Bernard Allison's expert production allows Katie's vocals to soar, while maintaining a raw, authentic edge that captures the essence of her musical style. The result is a polished yet impassioned album that resonates with listeners on a visceral level. In essence, it is a testament to Katie Henry's artistry and her promising future in the realm of blues rock. With its compelling narratives, dynamic instrumentation, and soul-stirring performances, this album solidifies Henry's status as a force to be reckoned with in the modern music landscape.

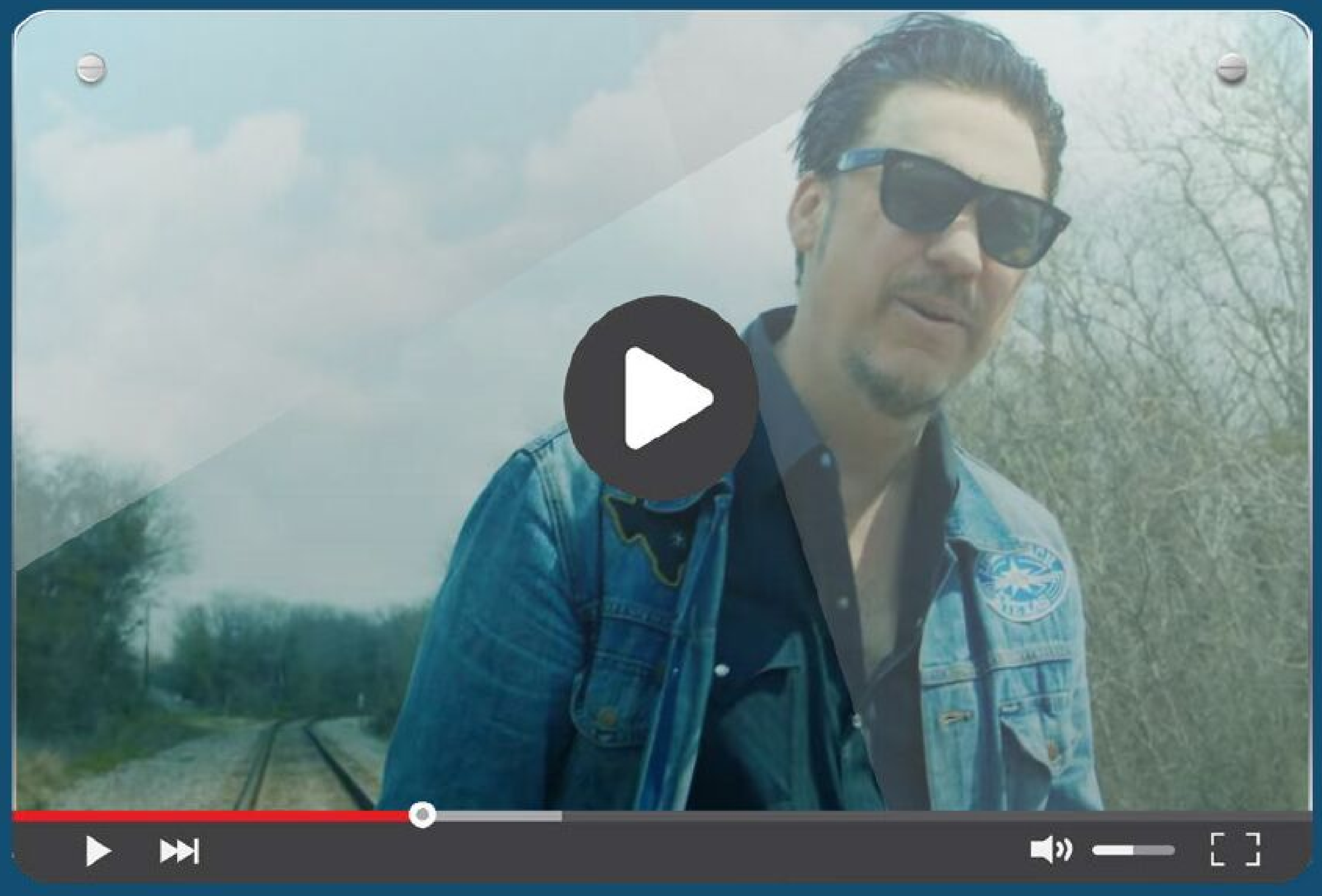
COLIN CAMPBELL

JESSE DAYTON

THE HARD WAY BLUES

Blue Elan Records

It has been three decades since Jesse Dayton released his first album, Raisin' Cain. Three decades of producing great album, after great album. Coming from the melting pot of music that is Austin, Texas, and across the border from Louisiana, Dayton has carefully crafted a career as a singer, songwriter, musician, and actor. The musical well, from which he has drawn covers a multitude of genres, Blues, Blues/Rock, Rock and Roll, Country, and everything in between. The Hard Way Blues sees all the aforementioned genres and influences gathered together in one magnificent album. The title track kicks off the album with Dayton's gruff gravelly vocals steering the song through hills and valleys, along with his inimitable guitar work, almost like a gunslinger walking into town. And that's what this album kind of puts me in mind, Outlaws, shooting from the hip with quick-fire lyrics and trigger-happy guitar riffs. Talkin' Company Man Blues is a perfect example, a story about a loyal but seemingly downtrodden employee raging against the machine, powerful stuff, but unfortunately, very relateable



> *A brilliant album from start to finish*

in these austere times. Shooter Jennings is well known to Jesse Dayton, Jesse played in a band with Shooter's dad, and now they are reunited on this album. Shooter not only plays keyboards, but he also produced the album and a mighty fine job he's done of that. Ballad Of Boyd Elder, and Hunstville Prison Blues are two prime examples of the Outlaw side of Dayton, the first puts me slightly in mind of Steve Earle (Cpperhead Road), and the latter, Bob Seger or a sprinkling of Springsteen. The Hard Way Blues has everything you want in an album. Great lyrics, great playing, and an underlying sense of bravado, a devil-may-care attitude. A brilliant album from start to finish. Now, any chance of gigs in the UK?

STEPHEN HARRISON

THE HARD WAY

NIGHT BRAIN

BUY MERCH

LISTEN

LITTLE FEAT

SAM'S PLACE

Hot Tomato Productions/MRI

Sam's Place is as much a tribute to the blues as it is to stalwart Little Feat Conga player Sam Clayton. With the hardcore of band co-founder, Bill Payne, and long-term servants to this musical cause, Kenny Gradney and Fred Tackett, as the nucleus at the heart of this redoubtable group, Sam Clayton is finally afforded his time under the spotlight. Already known for his fathomless baritone on a sweep of Little Feat songs, especially on Rock'n'Roll Doctor, this album opens with Clayton, Tackett, Sharrard co-write new tune Milkman. It sets the scene for a staggering homage to the mostly Muddy

> *thrillingly beats with a big pounding blues heart*

Waters and Willie Dixon selection of tracks. What is striking is Clayton's passionate and soulful interpretation of these classics on which he transforms their original intentions with a deep blues gravitas. Can't Be Satisfied benefits from this as does Sam's duet with long-time band friend, Bonnie Raitt, on Muddy Waters' Long-Distance Call. Bobby Charles' Why People Like That allows this crack band to get lowdown in the groove and swing as does Mellow Down Easy. With erstwhile Gregg Allman Band guitarist Scott Sharrard and respected drummer Tony Leone standing proud in the shoes of giants, Paul Barrere and Richie Hayward, Sam's Place, recorded at Sam Phillips' Memphis Studio, thrillingly beats with a big pounding blues heart.

PAUL DAVIES

KIRK NELSON & JAMBALAYA WEST

SAVOR THE MOMENT

Independent

Kirk formed this band back around 2018 following the release of a solo record, Collectibles. Then came a debut album with Jambalaya West called Lagniappe. Now we are completely up to date with Savor The Moment, and what a moment it is. This album has all elements to be found in New Orleans underpinning it, Blues, Jazz, and Soul and with elements of the Steely Dan West Coast music scene mixed in. I guess a good term to attach to STM would be Gumbo as it reeks of fine southern laid back grooves. You know the thing, loads of punchy horns, funky and soulful keyboards, and some Second Line mournful pacing bringing just pure joy. I like this albums ten originals and two covers, Basin Street Blues and I'm Beginning To See The Light, a lot. The covers close out the album in fine foot tapping style and if those don't conjure up a smile on your face I don' know what will. Turn Yourself In sounds like it could have come right out of Tuba Skinny's repertoire and to be enjoyed on a warm evening strolling on Royale Street. Absolute bliss! Tamale Man evokes images of kerbside food vendors and terrific food all with a kind of Mexican groove. Guess this review has started back to front as far as running order is concerned but who cares when you are in a good mood and the music is excellent. Bounce Around opens the album and sets the scene very well. As we roll on through I must mention the lovely slow Jazz groove on Swingin' So Low. Not everybody has the luck to visit NOLA however this album opens up that world. So welcome, the party's just begun.

GRAEME SCOTT

KRISSY MATTHEWS

KRISSY MATTHEWS & FRIENDS

Ruf Records

There's a lovely juxtaposition on the second of the two CDs that make up this excellent release by Anglo-Norwegian singer and guitarist Krissy, when John Otway finishes off his not too serious

Cockney vocal on the pop-rock and roll sing-along of Bust A Button and the album then segues into the slow, classic West-side Chicago sound of Hvorfor Stenger Du For Meg?, a serious plea to the Norwegian authorities sung in Norwegian by Krissy and Heidi Solheim. It is a good example of the breadth of Krissy's music, and of his knowledge. But then again, so is this entire release. The "Friends" number eighty performers, ranging from the American singer Big Daddy Wilson (helping out on a tough version of Freddy King's Pack It Up) to many, many European acts like Krissy's employers The Hamburg Blues Band and the wonderful Vanya Sky, among many others, my apologies as there is just not space to list everyone. He also drafts in some UK blues veterans including Paul Jones, Chris Farlowe, Clem Clempson and Arthur Brown. The material similarly reflects this diversity, from the hard rock of the opening Queen through a couple of numbers associated with Cream (and Jack Bruce's son Malcolm is also involved in addition to Pete Brown), on via the freakbeat of The Animals Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood - more probable a source than Nina Simone - and to the straight blues of Learn To Live With The Blues, with occasional asides such as a fine version of The Band's Americana anthem The Weight. There is enough to satisfy even the most ardent blues-rocker here. Such a project could very easily have become unwieldy, and it is no small tribute to Krissy himself that he provides consistency throughout - and all contributors seem to have realised this too. A real - and successful - tour-de-force from Krissy and his friends.

NORMAN DARWEN

SAM MORROW
ON THE RIDE HERE

Blue Elan Records

Sam Morrow is a connoisseur of rock & roll with a particular penchant for groove, expressed in good song writing and presentation of eclectic roots styed songs. His latest eleven tracked album kicks off with By Your Side, setting the tone with a stinging guitar riff accompanied by the distinctive snap of a Wurlitzer Electric Piano. Morrow's Texas drawl effortlessly draws listeners in, adding layers of Hammond, tambourine, and a wonderful guitar solo, making it an exceptional track. Diversifying his styles, he ventures into a Rolling Stones-style mid-tempo blues with Medicine Man, again dextrous slide guitar skills reminiscent in such bands as Little Feat. Tracks like Searching for Paradise, combine an unbelievably funky vibe with organ and drums. He manages to keep the songs to a brief three-and-a-half-minute mark. He proves, a less is more ethos to his songwriting skills works. Bassist Ted Russell Kamp plays a pivotal role in upholding the funk, notably on tracks like Thunderbird Motel. Using different instrumentation such as Clavinet and tremolo guitar add depth throughout the release. The final song is, St. Peter, where Sam Morrow delivers a laid-back groove coupled with poignant lyrics that reflect his approach to songwriting. The distorted electric piano solo and laid-back groove of this tune is infectious. It's also got one of the best set of lyrics here. This release is a testament to his musical versatility and authenticity, urging listeners to dive into its brilliance without delay, highly recommended.

COLIN CAMPBELL

SEVEN DARK LORDS
GHOST IN HERE

Independent

The first thing I have to say is that I like this album quite a lot. However the second thing I must say is that this in no way is what can be described as a Blues album. Instead you have a collection of twelve very fine strongly influenced edgy Country Americana songs. In this world of music, oftentimes we become obsessed with pigeon holing artists into particular boxes instead of just enjoying what comes at you. I am just as guilty of falling into that position as the next guy, however, we are a Blues magazine therefor Ghost In Here is not for us. Now, moving on, what we have are twelve high quality, energetic original tracks delving into the vagaries of the somewhat darker side of life. We kick off with Counterpoint weaving its tale of a somewhat violent guy and his relationship with his partner. More Love From This Bottle has harmonies and the rolling gait straight out of an early Eagles album. Obviously, hopefully, that title should indicate the state of a loveless relationship. The quality of the playing throughout is excellent with fine levels of production. This is the bands first collaborative outing based on the song writing talents of Darren Capp And Bill Kerry, ably supported by Max Johnson bass, Steve Blacow guitar and Dan De Wit drums. Glad Ghost contains the line of the album title whilst the band derives it name from the title of the final cut. So, if you want to open your music style choice a bit then do give this album a chance, as you may just be very pleasantly surprised to step outside of the Blues just for a moment.

GRAEME SCOTT

STEVIE AND THE BLUE FLAMES
DESTINATION: BLUES

Independent

Steve Bailey is a multi award winning harmonica player from Seattle, a veteran of the Northwest music scene with a long and successful career. Bailey's grounding in the Blues came from sharing first hand experiences with legendary Chicago players coming through town during the early 1970s. During the late 70s and early 80s Bailey spent over seven years in the great Issac Scott Band, learning from the best. He has written many original songs and has over twenty CDs to his credit. Normally Bailey does everything himself with regard to production, recording, etc... but on this release he teamed up with guitarist/producer Richard Newman who plays on six tracks, alongside blues flames members Steve Blood guitar, Ray Hartman bass and drummer David Hudson. With numerous other musicians playing on various tracks, Bailey leads his band across an eleven-track landscape that touches on an array of classic blues styles while sounding fresh, energised and thoroughly modern. Destination: Blues is as much about the journey as it is a place on the musical roadmap, and that trek is a fun-filled ride. The band hit the road with opening track Blue Flames Bar-B-Que, with its infectious rhythmic beat and fine interplay between piano and harmonica this swing blues soon gets the body up and grooving. The band keeps the tempo going on the funk edged Every Dog Has His Day. Next up the failed relationship of First Class Fool plays out on a solid shuffle beat with good guitar and harp bursts, and the funkier rhythmic beats and excellent guitar gives Blues Comes

A Callin', a solid dancing groove. Unemployment Blues, a lamentable Blues and a RnB cover of the Elmore James song Stranger Blues are given a rawness in production that works really well. The harmonica takes centre stage on the only instrumental Slim And Love Dealers. The album finishes with the harp infused Down And Out, another wonderful RnB blues that has the feel of the Doors style to it, a superb finish to an album that's really grown on me.

SHIRL

THE ORIGINAL GOSPEL HARMONETTES

THE COLLECTION 1949-62

ACROBAT RECORDS

The Original Gospel Harmonettes were one of the most popular and successful groups of the 1950's. Their lead singer, and main composer, Dorothy Love Coates was a major Civil Rights activist. Although the songs and execution were firmly rooted in traditional Gospel styles, their energy and intensity often took them across the border into R 'n' B stylings, which explains why their sound was a major influence on Rock And Roll pioneer, the legendary Little Richard. Later luminaries of Soul and R 'n' B, Cissy Houston, Sam Cooke, and Aretha Franklin listed The Harmonettes as a major influence on their styles. If you listen to tracks like In The Upper Room, and Just To Behold His Face, you really don't need to be especially invested in the faith and belief that inspired the writing and performance of these songs, and the other sixty-three songs on this triple-CD collection. It's entirely about the sheer joy and infectious enthusiasm that drives all the songs along. The fabulously powerful delivery of Ms Coates, ably backed and supported by the peerless harmony vocals are just so uplifting and chock full of enthusiasm and excitement, they can put a smile on the face and a dance in the step of the most cynical among us. Dorothy Coates, as a composer, was shrewd enough to understand that the strength and appeal of her group's material lay in underlining that enthusiasm in every cut they released, the better to appeal to the increasingly commercial market for Gospel music that was spreading throughout the USA in the 1950's. And the influence of her writing lived on way after the Harmonettes ceased recording. Her pure Gospel song You Can't Hurry God directly influenced Holland-Dozier-Holland's composition of The Supremes' You Can't Hurry Love. And her That's Enough number was covered by Ray Charles, and later re-arranged considerably by Johnny Cash. Such was the influence and reach of the music of Dorothy Love Coates, that her music filters down in subliminal but still recognisable ways to the artists who have followed her example, and taken Gospel further down the road, branching off into Soul, R 'n' B, and Rock And Roll on the way. Uplifting songs for a downbeat world, you can't argue with that.

ANDY HUGHES

THE JAKE LEG JUG BAND

SOME GLAD MORNING

Green Bullet Records

With a rare combination of instruments, The Jake Leg Jug Band tackles a series of old-time gospel music songs on Some Glad Morning. With instruments ranging from traditional folk instruments such as a fiddle, accordion, and mandolin, to trumpets, trombones, and clarinet, there is very little that at first listening lends itself to the blues. There are hints of blues in the Dobro of Toby Wilson, and traditional Dixieland jazz in the trumpet and clarinet solos. The main band of Duncan Wilcox, Liam Ward and Warren James employ the talents of nine other performers in a set list that takes in the traditional hymns of Just a Closer Walk With Me, and The Old Rugged Cross. Ezekiel Saw the Wheel is a rave-up of a number, with vocal chants, washboards and Jaw Harp pushing the rhythm along. One of the musical highlights of the album is Light From The Lighthouse, a relatively well-known Sea Shanty, which here starts off with gospel acapella singing. A pungent acoustic, trombone and clarinet solos add to the atmosphere of the song. I'll Fly Away features the vocal talents of Helen Hart and Bryony Rose, with banjo and fiddle featuring the musical backing. Although the songs are all a uniformly mid-paced tempo, the minor chord stomp of Just Got Over, At Last, adds an upbeat skiffle beat, and the clarinet that opens up My Life Will Be Sweeter Someday adds to the feeling of hope in the song, with banjos adding to the backbeat. Down by the Riverside is another upbeat song, and although there is a sense of traditionalism in the album, with no modern technology used in the recording, it is just on the right side of being a museum piece, and although most of the songs are more than a century old, the sense of fun that The Jake Leg Jug Band injects means that this album is never anything less than a foot-stomping exploration of other musical genres.

BEN MACNAIR

THE REVEREND SHAWN AMOS

SOUL BROTHER

Immediate Family Records

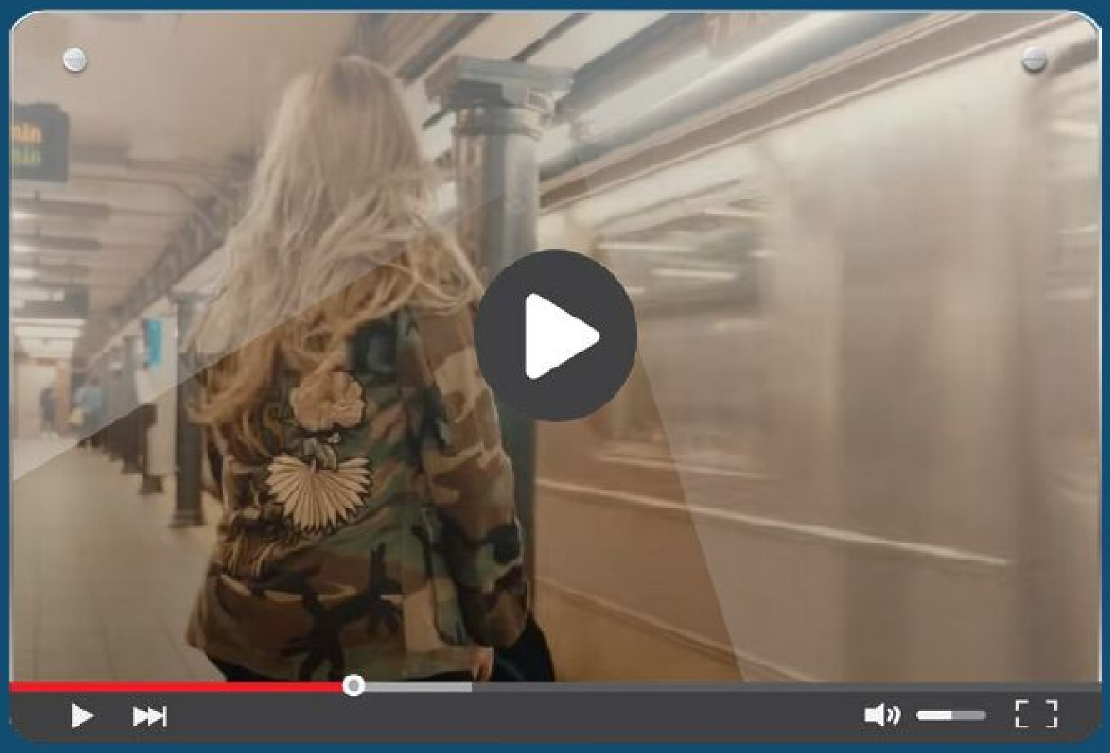
The Rev Shawn Amos is an established artist, producer, and author. On this album he moves away from his more direct Blues music style by introducing a more soulful funk sound while keeping the Blues vibe in place. The opening track-

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

HEAVY SOUL

Journeyman Records

This is her ninth studio album with expert production from Kevin Shirley, promises a seamless fusion of contemporary soul-pop with the raw, heartfelt essence of traditional blues. The album showcases a stellar lineup of quality musicians, including rhythmic mastery of Anton Fig, the versatile bass grooves of Alison Presswood, and the electrifying guitar work of Rob McNelley. Together, they blend their unique talents to craft an unforgettable sonic experience, solidifying Joanne's place as a dynamic force in the music world. Sweet 'Lil Lies melds her soulful raspy vocals with gritty blues riffs. She slows the tempo on Joan Armatrading's reinterpretation of All The Way From America, this encapsulates her diverse musical influences, raw and acoustic, then the band ramps up the rhythm and tone. Black Magic is full of blues infused hooks, call and response with backing vocals and consummate keyboard solo, a heady mixed feelgood tune. Drowning In A Sea Of Love is a soulful ballad that immerses listener in its emotional depth, highlighted by her evocative voice and poignant guitar melodies. This theme continues on the mellow tune, A Good Goodbye. Heavy Soul is a powerful anthem combining raw, bluesy guitar riffs with emotive vocals, creating an intense and deeply moving musical journey. Wild Love, is a high-energy track blending infectious rhythms and electrifying guitar work, making it a standout track. Another slow blues ballad Someone Like You adds to the mix of emotions. Devil In Me is a heavy rocking tune capturing the fierce spirit of blues-rock with every note. Last song Change Of Heart is a soulful, introspective track highlighting intense songwriting and smooth guitar licks, delivering a poignant narrative of love and transformation.



> *promises a seamless fusion of contemporary soul-pop with the raw, heartfelt essence of traditional blues*

COLIN CAMPBELL

BLACKEST DAY

CHANGE OF HEART

BUY MERCH

LISTEN

ing Revelation is a real Blues Rock head turner with its thumping bass line and crunching lead guitar which create the foundations for Amos to relay tales of his early life and his quest to get back to his roots. Using his Harmonica skills to great effect, he follows this theme throughout the album creating a much stronger funk sound in doing so. Particularly strong are the ballads, What It Is Like To Be Black, and Back To The Beginning, where he is aided by the McCrary Sisters who create a wonderful Gospel inspired sound. They perform on several tracks including the optimistic upbeat final track Things Will Be Fine. The only cover song is Sly and The Family Stone's Don't Call Me Nigger Whitey which is full of passion and underlying rage. On this track Amos performs an impressive duet with guest vocalist Denise Carite, worth noting that Amos has pulled in some top-notch musicians on the album including Steve Ferrone, Jerry Seay and Dapo Torimiro who supports Amos on song writing duties alongside Dr Roberts, who also provides stylish lead guitar work. This comes across as a very personal and emotional album from Amos, he uses his Blues roots and vocal style to lay the foundations for his exploration into Funk and Soul. The result is a very accomplished set of ten tracks, which sit together comfortably and will undoubtedly provide inspiration for a lot of people.

ADRIAN BLACKLEE

DAVID PRINGLE & FRASER SPEIRS

URBAN TALES

Independent

David Pringle and Fraser Speirs's collaborative album, Urban Tales, takes listeners on a mesmerising journey through the bustling streets and hidden corners of the cityscape. With a seamless fusion of jazz, blues, and contemporary elements, this duo crafts a sonic narrative that is both captivating and evocative. Twelve tracks here, mainly their own reinterpretations of old and obscure tracks done in their inimitable style, they are also joined by the amazing Neil Warden on guitars and Graeme Duffin guests on In Your Quiet Place. The opener My Mama Told Me So, is crisp and soothing, wonderful sonics on this instrumental with Fraser taking it from the bridge, with harmonica tones, setting the tone for what is a spectacular release. No Mean City has a late-night Jazz Club effect, David Pringle's keyboard playing makes a haunting refrain. In Your Quiet Place has jazzy tones and such consummate guitar playing, the chord notation pitch perfect, cool vibes throughout and Fraser's harmonica just adds that extra layer. The band's chemistry is outstanding on all tracks, seasoned musicians, quality shines through every track. Revelation, has a gospel feel and that piano introduction, so good. This theme continues on Pop Staples, This May Be The Last Time, great rendition, great harmonies New Orleans vibe, vocals strong and such classy rhythm. I Chose To Sing The Blues is a particular highlight. Also, the cover of Delbert McClinton's B Movie Box Car Blues is interesting, they added their own take to last verse, sounds great. Recorded and mixed during the pandemic, this is as Fraser states, music for grown-ups. A release to savour, so many layers to these eclectic music styled tunes, highly recommended.

COLIN CAMPBELL

THE MILK MEN

HOLY COW!

THE MILK MEN RECORDS

The Milk Men market themselves as blues rock, a catch-all term which sometimes denotes either a bunch of old boys banging out run of the mill 12 bars or some geezer torturing a Fender Stratocaster within an inch of its life. That's not quite a breach of Trade Descriptions Act, not least because there's often a hint of Dr Feelgood in the mix. But this band draws more widely on rock music as it was purveyed in Britain in the 1970s, including glam, pub rock and even the more melodic end of punk. Most of the ten songs – all self-penned – weigh in around the three-minute mark and shredding is eschewed in favour of succinct guitar lines from Adam Norsworthy, which actually add to the impact of the tune. His playing works well with the vocals of Jamie Smy, the possessor of a classic gutsy voice, and together they lift the weaker material. The rhythm section is made up of Lloyd Green, son of R&B legend Mick Green, on bass and Mike Roberts on drums. Best tracks include opener One Man Band, built around a riff that is a lineal descendent of Rolling and Tumbling. Hungover is a tale of the evils of the demon drink, spelled out in power chords, while Norsworthy gets his wah wah on for Give a Little Love, a pretty decent stab at funk. By all means investigate if you fondly remember Ducks Deluxe.

DAVID OSLER

SETH JAMES

LESSONS

Qualified Records CD

I'm an old man. I've been delving into the blues since first hearing Muddy, Wolf and Hooker back in the 1950s. Today's blues scene is like a well-stocked sweet shop full of delights still to taste. So, you receive a CD with a Texas guy on the cover wearing a Stetson. Is this going to be blues? Then you realise that the dozen tracks on this highly satisfying collection are all Delbert McClinton compositions. He's the man Rolling Stone magazine named the "Founding Father of Americana," and Seth James does him great honour. Seth James and his All-Star Grammy ® winning Band celebrate the great McClinton with verve, power and acute musical skill. He opens the show with a quote "Checking in and out these cheap hotels, playing these songs I know so well. The glamour of this life has long been gone, and all that's on my mind is going home'. As British blues fans, we'll all at one time or other have been familiar with Delbert McClinton songs. Go and see the Dave Kelly Band and he'll guarantee you a spirited version of 2 More Bottles of Wine. So, when you get into this collection by Seth James from the rocking Honky Tonkin' through powerful readings of Who's Foolin' Who and Maybe Someday Baby, plus the heartfelt Victim of Life's Circumstances, you realise here's a man and a band who are at the zenith of Texas blues. The actual McClinton connection couldn't be more authentic, as this CD is produced by Grammy winning musician, composer, and engineer Kevin McKendree, the man who has worked with Delbert McClinton for 25 years. Great production, terrific guitar playing, meaty brass section and above all, gold standard songs. You want Americana at its best? It goes by the name of Seth James.

ROY BAINTON

IBBA TOP 40

INDEPENDENT BLUES BROADCASTERS ASSOCIATION

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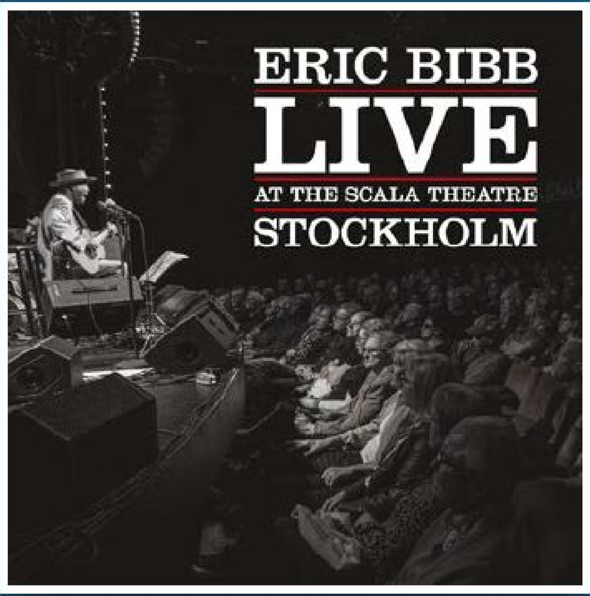
POS	ARTIST	ALBUM
1	ALEX VOYSEY	BLUES IN ISOLATION
2	JOHN PRIMER & BOB CORRITORE	CRAWLIN' KINGSNAKE
3	RAMBLIN' PREACHERS	SINS & VIRTUES
4	SUE FOLEY	ONE GUITAR WOMAN
5	BIG WOLF BAND	REBEL'S JOURNEY
6	BART BRYANT	BACKSTAGE II
7	COLE & WARD	BLUES & OTHER TRUTHS
8	TOM KILLNER	BORROWED TIME
9	STRUGGLE BUGGY	KEEP IT CLEAN
10	JENNIFER LYN & THE GROOVE REVIVAL	LIVE FROM THE NORTHERN PLAINS
11	CANNED HEAT	FINYL VINYL
12	RICK VITO	CADILLAC MAN
13	LITTLE BOBBY	DEALING FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE DECK
14	MISTY BLUES	SILVER LINING
15	THE CINELLI BROTHERS	ALMOST EXACTLY...
16	NOÉ SOCHA	SIMPLEBLUESBOY
17	BEX MARSHALL	FORTUNA
18	DION	GIRL FRIENDS
19	JO CARLEY & THE OLD DRY SKULLS	LIVE & UNDEAD FROM TEMPERANCE
20	ROCKY ATHAS	LIVIN' MY BEST LIFE
21	ANTHONY GERACI	TEARS IN MY EYES
22	ALTERED FIVE BLUES BAND	TESTIFYIN' EP
23	12 BAR DUDES	WHAT WENT WRONG
24	J.P. SOARS	BRICK BY BRICK
25	BIG HARP GEORGE	COOKING WITH GAS
26	KATIE HENRY	GET GOIN'
27	JOHN ANGUS BLUES BAND	IT'S HIGH TIME
28	BOOGIE BEASTS	NEON SKIES & DIFFERENT HIGHS
29	THE MIGHTY BOSSCATS	PHOTOSHOOT
30	TAJ MAHAL	SEXTET SWINGIN' LIVE AT THE CHURCH IN TULSA
31	LIGHTNING THREADS	OFF THAT LONELY ROAD
32	BLIND LEMON PLEDGE	OH SO GOOD
33	JAMIE WILLIAMS & THE ROOTS COLLECTIVE	STAY TRUE
34	CHRIS O'LEARY	THE HARD LINE
35	B'EE	WHAT'S IT GONNA B'EE
36	JOOLS WALDRON	BRANDY BREAKFAST
37	THE BLACK CROWES	HAPPINESS BASTARDS
38	CEDRIC BURNSIDE	HILL COUNTRY LOVE
39	NICK ALEXANDER	LIL' HOOCHIE
40	DEB RYDER	LIVE & HAVIN' FUN

IBBA PRESENTER'S

PICKS OF THE MONTH

MAY 2024



ERIC BIBB

LIVE AT THE SCALA

KRISSY MATTHEWS

& FRIENDS

HIGHLY ANTICIPATED NEW STUDIO ALBUMS

PRODUCED BY KEVIN SHIRLEY, EXECUTIVE PRODUCED BY ROY WEISMAN

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR
HEAVY SOUL

"HER GUITAR WORK IS INVENTIVE AND COMPELLING, HER VOICE GRITTY AND POWERFUL." - ROCK & BLUES MUSE

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK
RED MOON RISING

"SIMPLY ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL AND HEARTFELT BANDS I'VE HEARD IN YEARS." - MUSIC NEWS, 5 STARS

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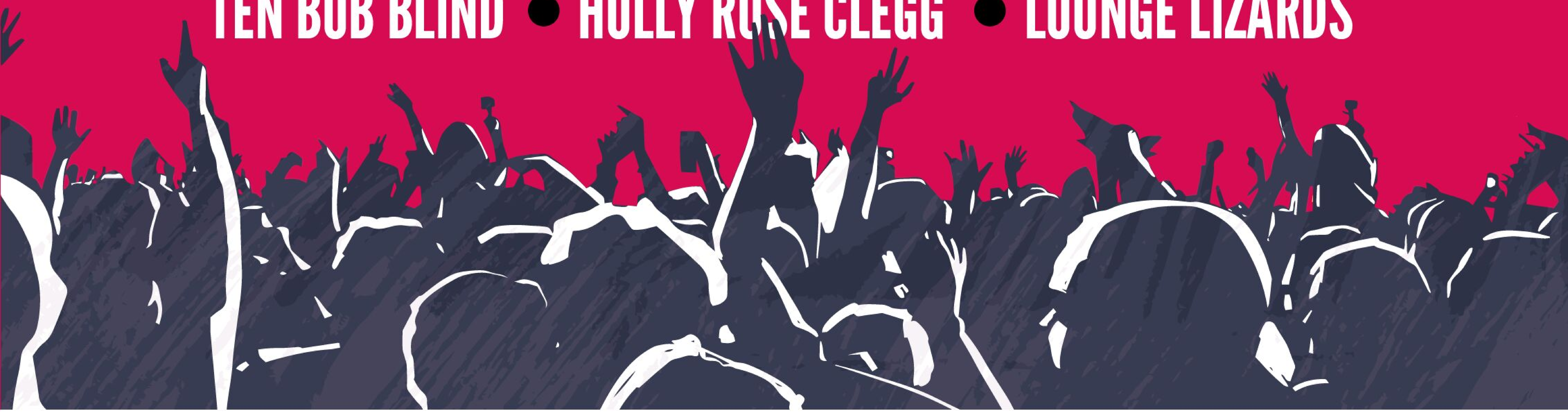
DAVY PATTISON BAND • IAN MCNABB • TERESA WATSON
TOM KILNER BAND • GERRY JABLONSKI BAND • DIRTY RUBY
SLAGBANK • KING SIZE VOODOO TRAVELLER • JED THOMAS BAND
TERRAPLANE BLUES BAND • RUSS TIPPINS • BIG RIVER
ROBBIE REAY AND CRAN • DOCTOR FIELGOOD • PHIL CAFFREY
TEN BOB BLIND • HOLLY ROSE CLEGG • LOUNGE LIZARDS



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